

A TEACHING COURSE SYLLABUS TO ENCOURAGE LONGEVITY OF SERVICE  
AMONG VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN WORKERS

A THESIS-PROJECT  
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
GORDON-CONWELL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY  
CASEY LOK  
MAY 2017



To Siew Leng

my dear wife whom I cherish and love;  
for your godly wisdom that I should pursue this doctorate  
and seminary teaching in my mid life crisis.

## CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
Chapter	
1. THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING	1
2. KEY FOUNDATIONAL MATTERS CONCERNING VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN WORK	13
3. CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND PRACTICAL CONCERNS PERTAINING TO LONGEVITY OF VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN SERVICE	47
4. PROJECT DESIGN	90
5. OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION	111
Appendix	
A. COURSE EVALUATION	121
B. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN	124
C. LIFE MAP WORKSHEET	126
D. LIFE MAP	129
BIBLIOGRAPHY	132
VITA	143

## ILLUSTRATIONS

### Figures

Figure 1. Levinson et al., <i>The Seasons of a Man's Life</i> (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 57.	50
Figure 2. Years On Staff (In Numerical Value)	93
Figure 3. Years On Staff (In Percentage)	94
Figure 4. Reasons For Resignation	95
Figure 5. Revised Syllabus	106

### Tables

Table 1. Expectations on a Minister from Two Sources	40
Table 2. Expectations on a Minister from Three Sources	45
Table 3. Cycles of Life	51
Table 4. Stages of Vocation	53
Table 5. Keeping the mindsets in balance about ministry	55
Table 6. What staff thought of doing after leaving organization	96

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Lemuel, Lisbeth, Lazary and Latricia. You supported me as your dad in prayers and by being sensible in your own ways. Many friends have made kind remarks about your good behaviors in Christ and as your parents, we thank God for these encouraging comments. It is our constant prayer that four of you will continue to fear and glorify God in all your lives.

To Dr. David Horn for being willing to still be my thesis-project supervisor even though you had left Gordon-Conwell at the beginning of my thesis-project. You guided me in broadening the scope of my research knowledge. And it is an honor to receive the diploma from you coming all the way from Boston to Singapore at EAST Commencement.

To Drs. Dave Currie and Kenneth Swetland for being the main teachers during the three years of residencies in October. Dave, you demonstrated Christ-like professionalism and was highly dedicated in your multiple leadership roles. Dr. Swetland, I remembered you as a very approachable and caring teacher who had mentored many Christian leaders including me.

To Rev. Dr. Chan Chong Hiok who was the National Director of Singapore Campus Crusade for Christ (presently, Cru Singapore) and interviewed me 26 years ago when I first began my journey as a vocational Christian worker in 1991. As EAST President, you instrumentally paved the way for me to join and teach at EAST in 2015 when I was at my mid life crossroad.

To Agnes Kao from Cru Singapore and Angeline Thien from Bethesda Serangoon Church (BSC) for immediately agreeing to offer your editing assistance when I asked you. To Joseph John who is a Christian counselor and a former elder of BSC for showing interest in my studies and thesis-project writing. You frequently asked me whether I needed any help and even bought some of these materials for my research.

To the trustees of Brash foundation for sponsoring my study through their generous scholarship. Also, to my team of prayer and financial partners who have been faithfully supporting my wife and me since the first day I joined staff in 1991 or thereafter. And to the saints from Bethesda Serangoon Church (including my Hougang Care Group) who witnessed me grow from a Christian convert in 1984 to who I am today, a vocational Christian worker.

Most of all, to God. Apart from You, I would not be able to complete this doctoral study. And also, by Your grace, I am able to live out Your calling for me as a vocational Christian worker. To You, God be the glory!

## ABBREVIATIONS

GCTS: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

VCW: Vocational Christian Work or Workers

EAST: East Asia School of Theology

EEC: EAST Extension Center

Other abbreviations include the shortened form of referencing from the books of the Bible when quoted.

Bible verses quoted are taken from the New American Standard Version unless otherwise stated.



## ABSTRACT

This thesis-project is intended to design a teaching course syllabus entitled, “Being A Christian Minister” for East Asia School of Theology to be taught at the local Singapore campus as well as the school extension centers in China, India, etc. The thesis-project is written to encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian workers. Its content is to examine key foundational matters like the definition of vocation and callings from God. It also includes some contributing factors and practical issues pertaining to longevity of vocational Christian service.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

#### **Introduction**

In 1991, I was asked by one senior elder at a church interview about my intention to join staff with Cru Singapore.<sup>1</sup> The question asked was, “Are you sure you want to do this job for life?” As a twenty-five year old man commencing my ministry then, this question was a reminder for me not to take vocational Christian work lightly. Churches have great respect for vocational Christian worker and overseas missionaries because they believe the vocation has significant implication. When John Piper writes that, “Mission is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Mission exists because worship doesn’t,” he is not de-emphasizing the significance of this soul-winning work.<sup>2</sup> Instead, through highlighting worship as the purpose of mission, he seeks to awaken the church in slumber to return and respond in greater zeal for the far-stretching task of world evangelization. The call is to raise and send forth more laborers into the harvest fields, be it in the local scene or overseas frontiers. On one hand, we can join Piper to rally the sacred call to send more workers; yet on the other hand, we cannot afford to neglect the existing laborers already battling in the fields.

There are various reasons for full-time staff to leave their organizations. Some of them moved on to serve in another Christian agency or to become church pastors, but

---

<sup>1</sup> Cru Singapore is the new name for Singapore Campus Crusade for Christ from 2013 onwards. The Christian organization was founded in 1972.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *Let The Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 15.

many also returned to the marketplace to become teachers, nurses and engineers. In his book *Preventing Ministry Failure*, Wilson lists the common issues that resulted in many ministers in the United States leaving vocational Christian work.<sup>3</sup> Some of these issues include not being adequately equipped for their jobs, marriage and family crisis, the lack of a close friend, depression or burnout and conflicts with people around them. In another research done by World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), three other causes for missionary casualties are mentioned. These are the lack of financial support and prayer support and spiritual immaturity.<sup>4</sup> These reasons for attrition found in these surveys may be similar to what ministers are encountering in Asia as well.

In the twenty-five years I have served with Cru Singapore, I would feel uneasy whenever I saw one staff member after another resigned from the organization. It is regrettable that in the midst of personal and ministry challenges, strong faith convictions in the early years of ministry, such as the love for God and the urgent task of reaching the lost, had waned away and no longer compelled them now as before.<sup>5</sup> While these former staff might claim that God had called them out of the organization, I believed that many of them left vocational Christian work because of issues that they have encountered which they believed could only be resolved by resigning from the organization. Unfortunately, the leaders and their colleagues had also accepted the belief that it was God who had called them into the ministry, and thus was also the One who called them

---

<sup>3</sup> Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 31.

<sup>4</sup> William Taylor, ed., *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1997), 316.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore Williams, *Living Without Regret: Practical, Biblical Answers to Encourage a Lifestyle of Faith, Sacrifice and Commitment* (Singapore: OMF, 1990), 3.

out as well. This way of thinking is actually ranked first among the top five reasons for ministers leaving the pastorate in a survey conducted by LifeWay Research (a Nashville-based organization) among 734 former senior pastors.<sup>6</sup> This seemingly “noble” and “right” reason for ministers’ resignation is considered led by God and not a loss in God’s kingdom, or could this be an excuse to satisfy our guilty conscience over their leaving?

Although it is not humanly possible to define God’s economy in terms of “gain” or “loss”, however, if we look at the immense scope of the yet unreached people in the harvest field and we count every human resource in the harvest field precious as manpower to bring the gospel to these lost souls, then in some sense there is a loss whenever a full-time laborer leaves his or her ministry field. The title of the WEF’s book that contains the earlier survey above sums up this sentiment: *Too Valuable To Lose*. Furthermore, for a Christian organization like Cru that has spared no resources in terms of financial support and the training of their staff workers, it would seem such a lot of wasted efforts if no preventive measures were put in place to avoid unnecessary attrition. Hence, this study serves to highlight and address some of the reasons for staff attrition in the harvest field as well as to introduce some important life skills that might contribute towards encouraging longevity of vocational Christian service. I feel that more could be done to retain precious workers who had responded to the Lord’s call to full time ministry, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into the harvest field” (Matt 9:37-38 NIV). This missionary call was sounded out from the One who became the first missionary Himself. David

---

<sup>6</sup> Lisa Cannon Green, “Why 734 Pastors Quit (and How Their Churches Could Have Kept Them)?” Gleanings, accessed February, 2017, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/january/why-734-pastors-quit-how-churches-could-have-kept-them.html>.

Livingstone described it aptly, “God had an only Son, and He made Him a missionary.”<sup>7</sup> And this missionary, our Lord Jesus, was the perfect example of someone who was very clear about His calling to come to serve and not to be served, and also about serving till the end of His life and ministry.

### **Thesis-Project Framework**

There will be five chapters in this thesis-project that includes an introduction, some key theological insights to certain concepts of vocational Christian work, several significant issues to encourage longevity of this vocational service, a thesis-project in the form of a seminary course syllabus and a conclusion.

Chapter one of this study introduces the purpose of this thesis-project that is to address the problem that leads to the attrition in vocational Christian workers and to encourage longevity of service in the vocation. The subject scope for the thesis-project is the students of the extension centers of East Asia School of Theology (EAST), a seminary that is based in Singapore. This chapter briefly explains some current concerns in the students’ ministry situations, the thesis-project assumptions, the methodology and the parameters of this study.

Chapter two discusses some key theological insights of some key concepts about vocational Christian work. Firstly, it addresses the common unrealistic expectations of the minister from the people and from the minister himself or herself. Then, we will discuss the role of a Christian minister by looking at God’s expectation of the minister

---

<sup>7</sup> Churchages, “Missionary Mottes,” accessed December 30, 2015, <http://churchages.com/en/missions/mottoes/>.

from the Bible. Secondly, we will look at two key aspects of vocational Christian work, namely its sacredness and its longevity. We will also compare the difference between the two terms - Christian service and vocational Christian service. Thirdly, we will study the different definitions of “calls of God” from the angles of discipleship, working vocation and the call to vocational Christian work. Here, we will also discuss the necessity to have a call for this vocation.

Chapter three discusses three contributing factors and three practical issues in the efforts to encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian workers. The contributing factors are connected to the ministers’ relationship with God, their spiritual disciplines in His Word and the care of their own souls. These are important facts that will help the ministers to serve for the long haul but at the same time, these areas can be easily and subconsciously overlooked. The practical issues are the ministers’ attitude in service, the relationship with people around them and their desires in ministry. To address the issue of attitude, he or she needs to know how to handle the difference and tension between faithfulness and effectiveness. To address the issue of relationship, the minister has to learn how to discern the difference between friends and foes. Last but not the least, to address the issue of desires, they need to know how to handle the difference and tension between personal aspiration versus organization needs.

Chapter four describes the course syllabus, the culmination of this thesis-project that is being used at the EAST Extension Center (EEC) under the Leadership Formation track of the EEC. This syllabus was first taught at one EEC in September 2015. The course equips Christian ministers on the important principles that will bring longevity in service. The course objectives include the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of

learning. The students will also be required to create a personal development plan to encourage them to last for a longer tenure.

Chapter five describes the outcome of the course that was last taught in September 2015 at the EEC. In this chapter, I would also propose areas to improve on the first syllabus by presenting the suggestions of the other faculty members and from the feedback collected from the last class of EEC students.

### **Current Ministry Situation**

According to a survey done by Cru Singapore over a period of five years, 58% of the staff who resigned had been with the organization for at least five years.<sup>8</sup> Though there is no official information on the number of these staff who are still presently in vocational Christian work, many of them had presumably left and had gone to the market place. The staff whose tenure is less than five years and the staff with longer tenure face different challenges in ministry and had different needs in life. By doing member care such as proper self-care and putting in place organization care, this will go a long way to increase the longevity of service for the staff in the organization.

The term “member care” is coined about two decades ago when a movement was started to create awareness among all Christian communities in accelerating mission sending efforts by enhancing all possible networks and resources.<sup>9</sup> The goal is to be good

---

<sup>8</sup> Exit Interview Data Analysis of sixty eight staff from December 2008 to June 2013 in Cru Singapore.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly O'Donnell, *Global Member Care: The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice*, vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2011), 6.

and responsible senders so that we will minimize casualties and reduce attrition rates among the workers in the mission fields.

Many ministers know how to teach their flock to take care of their own lives but they themselves fail to do so.<sup>10</sup> In Asia, Chinese ministers often labors relentlessly to the extent of neglecting themselves and the people around them. In his book *Resilient Ministry*, Burns gives an example of a Korean pastor who neglects self care for the sake of spiritual disciplines in his efforts to encourage his flock to do likewise.<sup>11</sup> At the EEC, I used the principles of this study to urge the Chinese ministers to take care of their well being, that is their inner souls, so that they would be able to serve God for the long haul.

### **Thesis-Project Assumptions**

Although the scriptures may not be explicit when it comes to the tenure of vocational Christian worker, we can infer that longevity of service in the vocation is highly encouraged in the bible. The culture of the Jewish people and the characters in the Old Testament exemplify what serving God is about. The term of service for a slave is six years and on the seventh year, the master is to discontinue his service and allow him to leave as a free man (Exod 21:2-6). However if the slave wishes to extend his service out of his master's goodness towards him and his family, the master would have the slave's ear pierced in the presence of God and from that point on, the slave will serve his master permanently. (New American Standard Bible uses "permanently"; New

---

<sup>10</sup> Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 13.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Burns, *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving And Thriving* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013), 62.



International Version and the Revised Standard Version use “for life”; English Standard Version and New King James Version use “forever”). Through the special act of ear-piercing, the avowed slave has chosen to serve the master for life out of his love for the master.

While the Jews could serve as God’s priests and prophets to the kings under the Old Covenant, Christ’s followers today step into vocational Christian work to serve the local church. After Christ’s resurrection, the apostles like Paul and Peter were ordained Christian ministers to serve among the first century believers. Unlike these early leaders who did not have the bible except for the scrolls to guide them, believers today are blessed to have the whole Bible as our reference. Through reading about the lives of these early church leaders, we are privileged to learn what it means to be a Christian minister. The imagery of the relationship between the slave and the master is often used to describe a believer’s commitment to God in the New Testament. The Greek transliterated word for slave is “doulos” and the word for servant is “daikonos.” “Doulos” refers to “someone who belongs to another without any ownership rights of their own. Ironically, “doulos” is used with the highest dignity in the New Testament – namely, of believers who willingly live under Christ's authority as His devoted followers.”<sup>12</sup> “Diakonos” refers to “the servant of a king: who advance others' interests even at the sacrifice of their own, who does what promotes the welfare and prosperity of the church.”<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Bible Hub, “1401. Doulos,” accessed December 30, 2015, <http://biblehub.com/greek/1401.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Bible Hub, “1249. Diakonos,” accessed December 30, 2015, <http://biblehub.com/greek/1249.htm>.

The apostles (Paul in Rom 1:1, Peter in 2 Pet 1:1 and John in Rev 1:1) and the brothers of Jesus (James in Jas 1:1 and Jude in Jude 1:1) introduce themselves as “doulos” and not “diakonos” of Jesus Christ in their epistles. “Diakonos”, which the word “deacon” is derived from means “servant.” But “doulos” means “bondservant” and it gives a more radical commitment than “diakonos” as it uses the illustration of the relationship between a slave and his master. We know the reason for this kind of commitment from Paul’s life and example. In Rom 8:37-39 and Acts 20:24, God’s love for Paul inspired him to labor for the sake of the gospel with all of his life. This conviction is evident and rings out clearly through all the letters of Paul. In Acts 20:24 and Phil 1:21, Paul describes ministry in the context of martyrdom. A careful study of the scripture shows that almost all the apostles were put to death by either crucifixion, skinned alive, thrown to the lions or burned at the stake.<sup>14</sup> Though not many ministers in the present age (with the exception of those serving in difficult locations) would face extreme persecutions or the possibility of martyrdom, we could infer the principle of longevity from the attitude bore by the early ministers towards their ministry. Longevity of vocational Christian service was not something that they taught their readers, but they lived it out through their example of martyrdoms. Through their willingness to die for the sake of the gospel, the apostles modeled the principle of longevity in service for us to follow.

Though present day Christian ministers are not apostles or brothers of Jesus whose lives had been radically transformed by Christ, it does not mean that our

---

<sup>14</sup> Scanned Thoughts, “The 12 Apostles: Skinned, Stoned, Sawed, Burned and Beheaded,” Wordpress, accessed December 30, 2015, <http://scannedthoughts.wordpress.com/2010/03/29/the-12-apostles-skinned-stoned-crucified-and-beheaded/>.

commitment to God is nonetheless inferior. With examples of the apostles like Paul and Peter to show us what longevity of service in vocational Christian work means, ministers today can know the sacredness of this vocation and this may help them to take their roles more seriously. In addition if we can also remind their faith communities that the role of a minister is nonetheless consecrated and deserves a special appreciation from God's people, both the shepherds and the people in the communities can cooperate to encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian workers.

### **Project Methodology and Parameters**

I am currently a teacher-in-training with EAST. The material of this thesis-project comes from my research concerning the longevity of service among vocational Christian workers. My first teaching assignment was at the EAST Extension Centre on September 12-17, 2015 in a restricted country. I utilized the research materials to design a syllabus to be taught at the EEC to a class of thirty pastors and church leaders. The name of the course is "Being A Christian Minister." A copy of the syllabus is attached in the appendix. As the course has helped these local Christian leaders, I hope that God will use this thesis-project to impact more Christian workers in the days ahead. I believe the course will benefit all Christian ministers, both church pastors and para-church workers. It is also suitable for the layperson who has been actively serving God but would like to know and explore what vocational Christian work entails. The course examines biblical principles and addresses topics, ranging from obeying the call of God to serving Him for the long haul.

The EAST Extension Centre (EEC) adopts the strategy to give the local leaders in creative access countries an opportunity to receive good and accredited theological education by sending qualified teachers to conduct regular and intensive classes in their own locations. These Christian leaders are students of EEC and they would gather periodically to attend the block classes offered by EEC and work towards fulfilling the required number of credit hours, which will lead them to graduate with a theological degree. As a seminary teacher-in-training, I was a part of a group of new faculty members who met regularly for tutelage and training under the principal of EAST. During a session on syllabus writing, the group actually used the first draft of my course syllabus as a case study. With the valuable input from these fellow faculty members, a working syllabus was developed. There is also a plan to approach several other experienced faculty members in the school to gather more feedback about the syllabus. I have also received student feedback from the course in September 2015. The class of thirty students gave a very positive evaluation of the content through a formal survey required by EAST. These completed questionnaires have been compiled and together with the principal, we analyze the written feedback. All these findings can be found in chapter five.

## **Conclusion**

As the previous syllabus that was used to teach the EEC in September 2015 was put together under a tight schedule as I needed to meet the deadline. I am grateful for this thesis-project opportunity to take a closer look at my teaching notes and seek out areas for improvement. I believe that the outcome of this thesis-project will give rise to a better

course in the form of a more complete, revised syllabus. As there are also plans to set up new EEC in Myanmar, Mongolia and India, it is very likely that the scope of this thesis-project will grow beyond this one class. In the immediate future, this course will also be conducted in the local campus of EAST in Singapore. It is my desire and prayer that God will use the syllabus to educate and encourage His workers to build a strong conviction to serve God for the long haul in their ministry fields.

## CHAPTER TWO

### KEY FOUNDATIONAL MATTERS CONCERNING VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN WORK

#### **Introduction**

Central to understanding how to encourage longevity of vocation Christian service, it is important to begin by studying the biblical view of work. Henri Nouwen says it vividly, “Without solid theological reflection, future leaders will be little more than pseudo-psychologists, pseudo-sociologists, pseudo-social workers.”<sup>1</sup> And applying Nouwen’s words into the context of this study, these pseudo leaders would then include vocational Christian ministers. It is important to unpack the biblical view of work as it helps to trigger a two-fold chain reaction that will lead to the significant understanding of longevity of vocational service. First, it is from the biblical view of work that the theology of vocation is closely knitted. Second, in knowing that the word vocation actually comes from the Latin root word “vocation” which means “to call”, a good understanding of the theology of vocation will then enable believers including Christian ministers to grasp the meaning of the callings of God with regards to discipleship and vocation.<sup>2</sup>

The chapter will then zoom into vocational Christian work and some key matters pertaining to it, namely the specific call from God to this vocation, the principles drawn

---

<sup>1</sup> Henri J M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections On Christian Leadership* (NY: Crossroad, 1989), 66.

<sup>2</sup> R Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 72.

from the Leviticus priesthood, the specific function of this vocation and the necessity for such a special call. This will be followed by looking at what constitutes a Christian minister and listing the expectations of a minister from various sources, namely the faith community whom he or she serves in, the minister's own expectation of himself or herself and God's expectation of the minister.

### **Brief History Of Work**

To begin with, people in the present days refer to their work either as a job or a vocation. It would be helpful to look at a brief history at how the idea of work has changed its meaning through the ages of time like a swinging pendulum as people in different ages hold contrasting concepts of work according to their worldviews, especially in regards to the Protestant and the non-Protestants view of work.<sup>3</sup>

Some Christians may assume that work came about because of Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. But the fall of man did not result in work being cursed by God.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, work is actually a gift from God. When God created man, work was a blessing from God instead as God instructed man to take care of the garden (Gen 2:15). Moreover, the Scriptures also clearly records that God Himself was actually at work when He created the world in six days and also rested on the seventh day. A biblical view of work thus also incorporated the Sabbath that God also exemplified. So God did not place a curse on work unlike what He did to Satan and the ground. However, the moment

---

<sup>3</sup> Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 71-83, 108.

<sup>4</sup> Jerry E. White and Mary White, *On the Job: Survival or Satisfaction* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988), 25.

that Adam and Eve sinned against God, work on earth became burdensome thereafter. Solomon, as a king could also testify after He had done many projects for His country in the land and acquired many slaves, abundance of possessions and treasures: “Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.” (Ecc 2:11 ESV). The apostle Paul added that just as child-bearing became more difficult as a result of man’s fall, man’s work was also subjected to futility as well (Rom 8:20).<sup>5</sup>

Under the influence of the Greek culture with philosophers such as Aristotle and Socrates, the Christians view work as a curse in the early church before the Middle Ages.<sup>6</sup> The root word in Greek for work is similar to that for sorrow. Not only the work alone brought this negative connotation, it was also perceived as giving up one’s freedom in the situation when a person was needed to work for another person. To the Greeks therefore, this lowly “mechanical arts” (a term created by Socrates) was only meant for the slaves to undertake so that they could “devote themselves to the exercise of the mind in art, philosophy and politics.”<sup>7</sup> This influences the present day thinking as well in

---

<sup>5</sup> Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1987), 101-105.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon T. Smith, *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999), 23.

<sup>7</sup> Ryken, *Redeeming the Time*, 71-72. Ryken listed the sources for his research: Adriano Tilgher, *Work: What It has Meant to Men through the Ages*, trans. Dorothy C. Fisher (NY: Arno Press, 1930), 3-9; Melvin Kranzberg and Joseph Gies, *By the Sweat of Thy Brow: Work in the Western World* (NY: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1975), 27-31; Robert L. Heilbroner, *The Making of Economic Society* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1962), 18-29; Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958), 80-94; P. D. Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* (London: Tavistock, 1977), 15-22.



associating vocation to a non-academic type of job such as a technician.<sup>8</sup>

The Catholic Church first introduced the doctrine of vocation during the Roman Empire. Vocation or calling is used to refer to the calling to serve as clergy in the church during the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> It was a highly spiritualized, yet unnecessary clerical call of God. The doctrine reinforced and marked the dualism between the clergy and the laity. However, it was individuals like Martin Luther and John Calvin who were greatly disturbed by the folly teachings of the Catholic Church, such as the doctrine of vocation, and the Protestant Reformation resulted. Among some important truths of the Reformation like justification by faith, the reformers also challenged the unhealthy hierarchy between the priest and the commoner. Vocation then took on a healthy “worldly” perspective from the previous “sacred” meaning that every believer was to remain on the station in life which was to be seen as from the Lord (1 Cor 7:17).<sup>10</sup> Through using various social situations in life regardless of whether the person is married (1 Cor 7:8), married but separated (1 Cor 7:11), circumcised or uncircumcised (1 Cor 7:20), slave or free (1 Cor 7:24) and widow (7:40), the Corinthians were exhorted to accept that “social or official position in relation to others” as from the Lord and to remain in it.<sup>11</sup> Luther affirmed that the scope of vocation was not confined to the job itself even though the job environment might eventually be part of it. Vocation was to

---

<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, “Vocational Education,” accessed October 5, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocational\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocational_education).

<sup>9</sup> O. S. Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (USA: Word, 1998), 33.

<sup>10</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 73.

<sup>11</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Definition of Station,” accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/station>.

bring blessings to the segments of family, job, society and church.<sup>12</sup> Thus, vocation is not to be seen as a gift like God's saving grace, but as a station which God places a person in to work for Him to serve his or her neighbor.<sup>13</sup>

During the Reformation, Luther's reformed doctrine of vocation was meant to correct that the calling from God was not restricted to the monastic lifestyle of the clergy, period.<sup>14</sup> But a setback resulted when the concept then swung to the other extreme worldly perspective of work instead. How did the setback come about? First, the Pre-Reformation's concept of vocation was meant only for the priests and this set the role apart from all the other stations in life. Second, the Reformation sought to remove the dualism between the sacred and the secular. Third, it was then that the Post-Reformation's view took on a secular view. The sacred meaning of vocation was replaced completely with the extreme view that the believers worked selfishly for themselves alone and not for God at all. Guinness classified the views of work before and after the Protestant Reformation as the "Catholic Distortion" and the "Protestant Distortion" respectively<sup>15</sup>. And after looking at the way how the theology of vocation was abused from the post Middle Age onwards, Guinness lamented the latter was more damaging than the former, "Better, it would seem, the dualism of making calling purely spiritual than the dualism of making calling purely secular."<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Richard Carter, "What Do the Simple Folk Do: A Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation as Mission Work," *Missio Apostolica* 14, no. 1 (May 2006): 52.

<sup>13</sup> John S. Feinberg, "Luther's Doctrine: Some Problems of Interpretation and Application," *Fides Et Historia* 12 (1979): 59.

<sup>14</sup> Feinberg, *Fides Et Historia*, 56.

<sup>15</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 31-38.

<sup>16</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 39.

## Two Present Views Of Work

Some present synonyms for work are job (or occupation) and vocation. In the books that I used to study about vocation, it was more than just a mere coincidence that the authors defined work differently in the last few decades of their writing. First, the authors used the word “job” for the books that were written three decades ago in 1980s.<sup>17</sup> Second, the word “work” is used for those that were written two decades ago in 1990s.<sup>18</sup> Third, the word “vocation” is used for those that were written since the beginning of the twenty first century.<sup>19</sup> Regardless whether the authors use job or vocation in their writings, their common desire is to teach readers to view work correctly from God’s perspective.

### First View Of Work As A Job

According to Jerry, work is more than just getting a salary through a job so as to provide for self and the family.<sup>20</sup> For those believers who view their work merely as a job, these individuals would use Gen 3 and say their work is a curse from God and they

---

<sup>17</sup> The books that I used are Jerry E. White and Mary White, *On the Job: Survival or Satisfaction* (1988) and Fred Catherwood’s *On the Job: The Christian 9 to 5* (1983).

<sup>18</sup> The books that I used are Doug Sherman and William Hendricks’ *Your Work Matter to God* (1992) and Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (1995).

<sup>19</sup> The books (listed from the latest publishing year onwards) which I used are Gene Edward Jr. Veith’s *God at Work (Redesign): Your Vocational Christian work in All of Life*, Redesign ed. (2011); Parker J. Palmer’s *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (2000); Gordon T. Smith’s *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential* (1999); R Paul Stevens’ *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (1999); O. S. Guinness’s *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (1998); Eugene Peterson’s *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (1994).

<sup>20</sup> White, *On the Job*, 27.

have no choice but to find a job in order that they can survive in this world.<sup>21</sup> For many, they may be dragging their feet to their office on Monday and for the rest of the week but they look forward to Friday so that their work can be more bearable. They think that their job is merely a means for them to earn the keep for themselves and their family. They even feel that God may not be interested in the mundane job that they do during the weekdays but only when they are present and serving in church on Sundays. And for the rest of the people, as the purpose of job is for their own prideful accomplishment in the society, they will resort to any selfish means in order to climb up the corporate ladder even at the expense of their own health, affecting their marriage, neglecting their children and other areas in their life. Their mentality is live to work. Thus success at work equates to fulfillment in life.<sup>22</sup> All these essentially constitute the worldly view of work. In short, work is merely nothing but just a job.

In order to address this negative mindset about job as described above, Jerry exhorts the readers from the teaching of discipleship, their attitude for their job is such that they work for God. He states that the two objectives of every believer are to grow inwardly as a child of God and to evangelize outwardly as a witness for Christ. And these two objectives are to be fulfilled in all four sectors of a believer's life, namely the personal (spiritual), family, job and ministry (church). Jerry sees work from a micro-view that job is only one of the four segments of a person's life. On the other hand, people who see their work as a vocation are totally different altogether at their working station. They cannot wait to report for work on Monday and enjoy their work so much so that the week

---

<sup>21</sup> Sherman, *Your Work Matter to God*, 98.

<sup>22</sup> Sherman, *Your Work Matter to God*, 27.

passes very fast that they do not look forward to Friday.<sup>23</sup> These believers view their work as a calling from God that encompasses all of their life, and not merely as a job in one of life's sectors.

### Second View of Work As A Vocation

What is the concept of vocation all about? To begin with, this word in contemporary English attaches a peripheral function such as vocational education to it (a hands-on education giving the apprentices some practical job skills) that does no justice to its etymology. According to Ranson, the way the Pre-Reformation and Post-Reformation defined vocation has shaped this thinking of the American culture towards what vocation is all about:

Whereas vocation in the medieval church meant only the “religious” profession, it came after the Reformation to mean “secular” occupations. Thus vocation in America means an occupation below the “professions,” and vocational education means training for manipulative skills below training of the mind in liberal arts. Both of these interpretations are, of course, contrary to the biblical teaching.<sup>24</sup>

Many Christians in the world have missed out the important idea as to what work is all about. Though the present and exact meaning of vocation in its root word does not explicitly appear in either the Old or New Testament, the concept of vocation is an important theology as it corrects the wrong terminal thinking of many present day believers concerning what work is all about. Simply speaking and according to Veith, the

---

<sup>23</sup> Craig Nathanson, “What’s the Difference Between a Job and a Vocation?” Trans4mind, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.trans4mind.com/counterpoint/index-creativity-career/nathanson14.shtml>.

<sup>24</sup> Guy H. Ranson, “The Christian Doctrine of Vocation,” *Review and Expositor* 54, no. 4 (Oct 1957): 597.

purpose of vocation is “to love and serve one’s neighbor.”<sup>25</sup> This actually echoes what Jesus teaches that we are to love our neighbor as oneself (Matt 22:36-40). And who is one’s neighbor and how a person love them is shown in the way the person blesses one’s spouse, one’s family, one’s colleagues, one’s friends, and so on.

As it could be seen from tracing the idea of work that was developed from creation to the present age, the Latin root word, “vocatio” for vocation was actually a post-biblical word. The Hebrew word “qara” and the Greek word “kaleo” mean “called out” and “calling” respectively, but the meaning of calling in this post-vocational age has taken on a more significant note.<sup>26</sup> Beginning from Abraham as the father of Jews, God revealed His plan for the world by first calling the Israelites to be His people in the Old Testament. When Jesus Christ entered into this world in the New Testament, besides still keeping His covenant with Israel, God now called both the Gentiles as well as the Jews to be followers of Jesus to bring God’s plan of salvation to the world.<sup>27</sup> Living in this present time with both the Old and New Testaments in our hands, Christians marvel at God’s faithfulness all through the ages in calling His people to be His own and for His purpose.

The Latin root word of vocation was first used by the Catholic Church, referring specifically and only to the call of the clergy. Together with the other false teachings of the medieval church, this wrong use of the word “vocatio” also disturbed the reformers

---

<sup>25</sup> Gene Edward Veith Jr., *God at Work (Redesign): Your Vocational Christian work in All of Life*, redesign ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 39-40.

<sup>26</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 72.

<sup>27</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 83-88.

and triggered the Reformation. But credit can be given to “vocatio” as the word “vocation” that comes from “vocatio” is used interchangeably in the present day with the word “calling.” The scope of the word is not restricted to the clerical call but “our engagement with the world in response to God.”<sup>28</sup> As God’s created being, Westminster’s Catechism teaches that the chief aim of man is to glorify Him through his life on planet earth. God gives different calls to different believers to glorify Him while on earth. Perkins defines a call of God as having three components: the call comes from God, marks the beginning of a certain way of life and has an end goal. “A calling is a certain kind of life, ordained and imposed on man by God, for the common good.”<sup>29</sup> The following will look at these three different callings of God with their different purposes, namely discipleship, vocation in general and vocation Christian work.

### **Call To Discipleship**

The general call to discipleship must first be studied prior to examining the general call to vocation or even prior to the specific call to vocational Christian work.<sup>30</sup> This first and foremost calling from God undergirds the other subsequent calling(s) about vocation. Knowing the importance of this primary call helps a person to understand that the people of God are first called to a relationship with Him before He called them to accomplish something.<sup>31</sup> Each conversion experience is different and unique for each

---

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 10.

<sup>29</sup> William Perkins, *A Treatise of the Vocations, Or Callings of Men with the Sorts and Kinds of Them, and the Right Use Thereof* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1605), 6.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 72.

believer. The testimony of any born-again Christian speaks forth God's amazing work in saving that particular soul through the Holy Spirit. The believer now becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ. The word "disciple" in Greek, "mathetes" means "learner or follower."<sup>32</sup> Physical suffering and even martyrdom experienced by the early Christians were the price tags when they chose to take up their own cross and follow Christ. Even in the absence of these adverse threats today, present day believers need to know what that same call to discipleship actually entails. The purpose of this call that sounds out from God throughout all ages to every fallen man or woman is that he or she will live to glorify the Creator God and to enjoy Him forever.<sup>33</sup> And if every disciple of Christ were to be convinced in living out the real meaning of this call, the fulfillment of the Great Commission in Matt 28:18-20 would be at hand and the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ hastened.

Regardless of whatever vocation or station in life that God may place a Christian, the person has to understand that he or she is a follower of Christ wherever he or she goes. This will prevent the silo mentality of being a "part-time" or "full-time" witness for God. Take for example, the common use of the term "full-time Christian service" has some unintended implications and an alternative phrase is being encouraged.<sup>34</sup> This paper uses the term, vocational Christian work or vocational Christian service instead. The basis that forms this thinking of full-time and part-time Christian service is similar to that

---

<sup>32</sup> Barclay M. Newman, Jr, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1993), 110.

<sup>33</sup> Westminster chief catechism: "The chief aim of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

<sup>34</sup> White, *On the Job*, 231.



which shapes the dichotomy between what is called the spiritual and the secular.<sup>35</sup> It is mentioned earlier that the origin of this silo mentality can be traced back to the days of Roman Catholicism. The vocation of a priest is actually considered sacred in contrast to the secularity of the work of commoners.<sup>36</sup> Guinness raises this concern too that the term is detrimental towards our attitude in serving God.<sup>37</sup> The “full-time” adjective may give the wrong impression that one can be a disciple of Christ and serve Him on a part-time basis. Thus, whatever the vocation the believers are doing, each individual is to remember that he or she is to be the salt and light for Jesus wherever he or she is. (Matt 5:13-14)

### **Call To Vocation**

Now that the call to discipleship is laid out as the foundation, the general call to vocation can now be discussed further. In the same way that a person needs to be called by God to enter vocational Christian work, does a person also need a calling from God to pursue any other vocation in life? A call to vocation is all about fulfilling that vocation in the context of keeping the cultural mandate as stated in Genesis 1:28. Being ignorant of what the mandate is and what it entails, many Christians think that this commandment is all about married couples raising their biological children to become Jesus’ followers to populate the world. But the same Hebrew root for “multiply” in Genesis 1:28 is first used

---

<sup>35</sup> Arthur F. Miller and William Hendricks, *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1999), 173; Chuck Colson, “Redeeming Vocation,” the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/15248-redeeming-vocation>.

<sup>36</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 32.

in Genesis 1:22 when after the creatures in the waters and birds in the sky were created; God blessed them to increase in numbers. Thereafter, the same root word is used twenty eight times in the Old Testament and it appears fourteen times in the book of Genesis. With the same word spoken to Adam, God also blessed Noah (Gen 9:1), Abraham (Gen 17:6), Jacob (Gen 35:11) and even Ishmael (Gen 17:20) to be fruitful and multiply.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, the two-fold mandate is given to all of God's people to fulfill. Whether the believer's job is janitor, homemaker, clerk, student, pastor, manager, doctor, lawyer, etc.; his responsibility through his vocation is to help influence and transform this fallen world in one way or the other from its decaying culture. Choosing a vocation is unlike taking on a job with a high salary nor embarking on a career that merely satisfies one's ego. When one learns to listen to God because a vocation is calling, the ability to discern that call will eventually lead to the vocation that God intends for the person. Palmer says it well, "Vocation does not come from a voice 'out there' calling me to become something I am not. It comes from a voice 'in here' calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God."<sup>39</sup>

The medieval Church treated vocation as a doctrine and referred it specifically to the clerical call, to summon people to become priests, monks or nuns as they sacrificed their commoner's secular job for the life-long spiritual vocation in the monastery.<sup>40</sup> Though the topic of vocation has become a very important theology concerning

---

<sup>38</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1987), 33.

<sup>39</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 10.

<sup>40</sup> Guy H. Ranson, *The Christian Doctrine of Vocation*, 596.

Christians' view towards work, it is not considered as a basic Christian doctrine today. The Bible contains only elements but not the full concept of what vocation is about.<sup>41</sup> In view of how work can bless the people through family, job, society and church, Luther's reformed doctrine of vocation suggested that a person could have two vocations in a family segment. Take for example a person can be both a parent to a child as well as a son to a father in family.<sup>42</sup> And the illustration can be crossed over to the job segment - this person can also be a manager of a company. But the argument is that tension may arise when the person thinks that he or she can have more than one vocation. In the example given, what will happen if the responsibilities in the company are so heavy that in order to meet the work deadlines, the parent has to forego his or her time at home with the spouse and the children?<sup>43</sup> Therefore, I feel that a believer should only have one primary vocation and the rest of his or her secondary obligations should come under that one vocation. One example can be "his vocation as a clergyman was not eclipsed by his scientific career."<sup>44</sup> One's vocation, regardless of whether it is a pastor, teacher, lawyer, homemaker or a janitor, is what God has called the person to in this station in life. And having understood the meaning of vocation, he or she is then to live up to become the kind of pastor or janitor that the Lord intends the person to be.

Though Luther and Calvin were unable to influence the people after the Reformation concerning the correct idea of vocation, believers today also have an

---

<sup>41</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 74; Ranson, *The Christian Doctrine of Vocation*, 596.

<sup>42</sup> Feinberg, *Fides Et Historia*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> Feinberg, *Fides Et Historia*, 64.

<sup>44</sup> Google, "Vocation," Vocation, accessed Feb 26, 2017, [https://www.google.com.sg/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enSG504SG511&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=vocation%20meaning](https://www.google.com.sg/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C5CHFA_enSG504SG511&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=vocation%20meaning).

understanding of their work that is without the concept of vocation.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the secular bearing of work that present believers follow causes us to climb the career ladder by whatever means to the extent of affecting our own health, breaking down marriages, neglecting family members and developing all other ill effects. Though well-written books are available to address the difference between vocation and job, the challenge to get God's people to "think vocationally" still remains daunting.<sup>46</sup> And this is an important signpost of reminder to this study as it considers what the following calls of God is all about, especially the call to vocational Christian work.

### **Call to Vocational Christian Work**

Now that the biblical meaning of work is defined correctly using the concept of vocation or calling, thus a person's pilgrimage on earth is only made meaningful and accomplished when he or she is able receive the two callings from God, namely the call to discipleship and the call to vocation. As soon as God had created man, He assigned Adam to take care of the Garden of Eden that He had planted (Gen 2:8, 15). This aspect of vocation to provide for the needs of his family is an act of responsibility which man has to fulfill.<sup>47</sup> Remember that Christian work is also one such vocation. Under the calling to vocation in life, God also calls some believers to vocational Christian work. But is there a difference between vocational Christian work and any other vocation in the market place? If there is, what is it about vocational Christian work that makes it unique

---

<sup>45</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 24.

<sup>46</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 95-111.

<sup>47</sup> H. F. R. Catherwood, *On the Job: The Christian 9 to 5*, ed. George N. Monsma (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 24.

and different from any other vocation? Powell states there are two main categories of callings from God, namely “coming in” which means the newly found relationship between the convert and God, and “going out” which explains the service that the saint renders to God.<sup>48</sup> Concerning the latter, Powell further explains that some believers will receive a specific call into vocational Christian work.

The twelve tribes of Israel came after Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They descended from Jacob’s twelve sons (God changed his name to Israel); Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. God specifically set apart the Levites from these twelve tribes as priests for the work in the sanctuary. The high priest and the priests who were serving inside and outside the holy of holies respectively were being entrusted with the holy things of God. All of them, especially the high priest was to adhere strictly to the regulations concerning the preparation of their bodies and attires before they stepped into the temple to perform their duties. As the Levites were not given any land to till and earn their keep, their livelihood came from the offering that the Israelites brought to God in the temple. God’s sanctification of the priestly roles in that only the appointed Levites could perform the duties was not to be taken lightly.

Uzziah treated the LORD with contempt when he assumed that as a king, he could step into the holy place and offer incense. He defiled the holiness of the priesthood and despised the sacredness of the temple. As a result, God struck him with leprosy immediately and he was a leper until the day he died. (2 Chro 26: 16-21). It is not by

---

<sup>48</sup> G. Glen Scorgie, general ed., Simon Chan, Gordon T. Smith, James D. Smith III, cons. eds, *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (USA: Zondervan, 2011).

coincidence that the setting of Isaiah chapter six occurs after the death of this foolish king. The people would have heard and perhaps were terrified by the way God struck their king with illness and death. But against this atmosphere of reverential fear, the holiness of Yahweh shone unreservedly. The scene unfolded by God calling Isaiah to become His prophet (Isa 6:1-8). Here is a great example of how God's will was executed when the sin of man (both Uzziah and Isaiah) was treated accordingly in the presence of the Holy One. The apostle Paul is one minister who understood his important mission to bring the gospel to lost souls so that their names could be inscribed on the Lamb's book of life. In Acts 20:24, his dedication to the vocational Christian work goes all the way to even his martyrdom.

In the same way that priests, prophets in the Old Testament and the apostles in the New Testament were called to be God's envoys in the biblical world, vocational Christian work is to be taken up by appointed ministers who are called by the Lord Himself. As the Church is Christ's representative on earth, ministers hold the reverential role assigned by God to lead and shepherd His flock. Ministers whose tasks are teaching and preaching specifically stand as the interface between the biblical world of the scriptural witnesses and the present world of God's people. A community is only as strong as the minister is diligent to understand theology for himself. He or she is responsible to teach and relate important biblical principles to the people in such a way that they can understand. They need these spiritual truths to make wise decisions in their lives. All too often, theology is looked upon as the abstract entity for scholars only in their high lofty pedestals. And as ministers are crunched for time to preach weekly and perform other pastoral duties, this leads to the impoverishment of their flocks. As a result,

the church is not equipped to handle the moral mess that faces the society today such as the legalization of homosexual marriages.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the godliness of Christian ministers cannot be more emphasized. Moreover, their lives must match their talk as the flock can easily detect hypocrisy. St. Jerome (another early church father and author of the Latin bible, Vulgate) raised the bar: “They talk like angels but they live like men.”<sup>50</sup> And their work demands “angelic virtue.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, if ministers as spiritual agents of God want to be effectively used for God, they are not to take their sacred roles lightly.<sup>52</sup>

### Special Function Of Vocational Christian Work

In recent years, much attention has been drawn not to view vocational Christian work as sacred and the rest of vocations in the market place as secular.<sup>53</sup> The distinction between the sacred and secular started in the early churches during the reign of Emperor Constantine (307-337 AD) just before Christianity became the secular religion of the Roman Empire. Eusebius of Caesarea, commonly known as the “Father of Church History” influenced this dichotomy issue profoundly.<sup>54</sup> The commoners were influenced

---

<sup>49</sup> Gerald Hiestand, *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting an Ancient Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 13.

<sup>50</sup> Harold V. Cordry, *The Multicultural Dictionary of Proverbs: Over 20,000 Adages from More Than 120 Languages, Nationalities and Ethnic Groups* (1997; repr., Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), 292.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 51.

<sup>52</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 46, 119-120.

<sup>53</sup> Miller, *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want to Be*, 173; Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 25; John R. W. Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975), 31; Chuck Colson, “Redeeming Vocation,” the Colson Center for Christian Worldview, accessed February 18, 2016, <http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/15248-redeeming-vocation>.

<sup>54</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 32.

to think that people who joined the ministerial functions are first-class and the rest, second-class Christians. An increasing number of present day scholars joined hands to confront the detrimental effects of this segregation. They champion a new paradigm mindset that every job and vocation under the sun is spiritual.<sup>55</sup> Advocates like Smith seek to correct the erring mindset by educating Christians that there is no one vocation that is more spiritual than the other. However in recent years, the over-emphasis for this wholesome perspective also backfired. On one hand it is assuring to know that every vocation is spiritual; yet on the other hand, it gradually adulterates the urgency of the call to vocational Christian work. The repercussion is thus formed. A noble exhortation at the beginning ironically ends in hampering the mobilization of laborers to be sent into the harvest fields. God-fearing believers assume the convenience and follow the least-resistant path of this also so-called “sacred” vocation into the marketplace. It is high time now for Christian leaders to return to the holy task in urging God’s people to seek His call to vocational Christian work. In so doing, believers worldwide could unite together to help accelerate the fulfillment of the Great Commission. This backlash in seeking to re-align the mindset of sacred/secular dualism also downplays the significance of vocational Christian work.<sup>56</sup> This subtle prevalent backlash in the last two decades may also be one key factor leading to vocational Christian workers who quit from vocational Christian work, and flee to the marketplace and accept the offers there since those are also “sacred” vocations. Attention should not only be drawn to caution against the silo mentality of the sacred and secular, efforts should be taken as well to rediscover the

---

<sup>55</sup> Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Stevens, *The Other Six Days*, 75.



urgency of doing vocational Christian work in view of Christ's return. The following explores this again by learning from the spiritual heritage in the early church traditions.

Besides those few biblical insights mentioned above which anchor the important and godly task of ministers, there are significant contributions from other early church fathers who lend their support as well, including saints like Gregory Nazianzus, John Chrysostom and Gregory the Great.<sup>57</sup> Saint Gregory of Nazianzus (330-390 AD) was deeply troubled in being ordained by his father and the diocese. He felt so inadequate after heeding the specific calling of becoming a priest that he actually fled from his parish and retreated into an ascetic lifestyle in Pontus. Eventually, he sorted out his inner struggles and returned to his parish. It was during that "wilderness" period that he penned down his lessons learned in "The Flight To Pontus." As a theologian and archbishop of Constantinople in ca. 463, he spelt out the high moral and spiritual standard of priestly functions. He defined that the priest was the "physician of the soul" and the goal of the spiritual physician was to "provide the soul with wings to rescue it from the world and give it to God."<sup>58</sup> Pope Gregory I (also known as Saint Gregory the Great, 540-604 AD) built upon this foundation of pastoral theology to develop the concept of pastoral care 230 years later.<sup>59</sup> Though Gregory the Great was also known for some absurd allegorical interpretations, his *Pastoral Care* impacted church history for it echoed similar grave concern of Gregory Nazianzus on the "high" calling of vocational Christian workers.

---

<sup>57</sup> Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 7.

<sup>58</sup> Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 10.

However, potential minister candidates should not shy away from the unique calling of vocational Christian work like Gregory Nazianzus. They should not be cowered by the inner fear of being disqualified from the moral high standard of a minister as the other fear from above of not doing the will of the Father surpasses all fear.<sup>60</sup> John Chrysostom cautioned that if a believer knew what was God's will and had what it took to do but chose not to do it, this was false humility.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps the reason for the above is the ministers' fear that they may tell others to do what they themselves fail to do. But again, the fear of hypocrisy should not deter the potential minister from the high calling to be "moral guides" for the people of God.<sup>62</sup> Knowing that hypocrisy is detestable in the eyes of God (Matt 23:23-29), being sensitive to the sin of hypocrisy can be another driving conviction in helping us to walk our talk.

Though the risk is valid about having a lopsided outcome on the debate concerning the dichotomy between what is spiritual and what is secular, and the "high" calling of vocational Christian work, Blackaby asserts that in responding to God's call, it is nonetheless a great let-down to choose a vocation other than being a Christian minister. When God calls, He also provides. Believers are to be careful not to let themselves or any other people influence them to shun or turn away from the sacredness of being in the center of God's will.<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 27.

<sup>61</sup> Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> Rebekah Miles, *The Pastor as Moral Guide, Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 16.

<sup>63</sup> Henry T. Blackaby, Henry R. Brandt, and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Power of the Call* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 28.

## Necessity Of A Call For Vocational Christian Work

In deliberating the issues concerning longevity of vocational Christian service, is there such a need to receive a specific call from God to enter this vocation in the first place? Being in a local mission agency for the last twenty and more years and serving alongside more than one hundred staff who receive our monthly support by faith, I had the privilege to interact with individuals who had differing views concerning the calling from God. Some staff members join the organization for a short term only (one to two years), after which they will begin to pursue their career in the working world. This is so called the “first fruits” of the many subsequent years in the marketplace after their tertiary education.<sup>64</sup> Another group that consists of people who have been on staff for at least five years, *thinks* that as long as God does not lead them out of vocational Christian work, they will not leave this work. The remaining staff who do not subscribe to any of the above views are convinced that by the grace of God, they will serve in His majesty’s service for the long haul; but it may or may not necessary be in the present Christian organization.

Regardless of whether it is the staff members in this organization or in another ministry ground such as the seminary students in EEC (EAST Extension Center), there are ministers who felt that they received a definite calling from God into vocational Christian work while the rest took up this vocation under different circumstances. Gary Friesen, the author of *Decision Making and the Will of God: A Biblical Alternative to the Traditional View* belongs to the latter category. Friesen challenges the “*traditional view*”

---

<sup>64</sup> A trend of thought (among graduating students) that was shared with me a few years ago by a staff who was involving in resource recruitment.

which states that a call is needed from God for; but he develops another “*wisdom view*” which questions the necessity of a call.<sup>65</sup> He feels uncomfortable about the common question posed to minister/missionary candidate in any screening interview; the interviewee will be asked to describe how God has “called” him into the vocational Christian work.<sup>66</sup> Friesen’s “*wisdom view*” questions the need for an inner stirring from God; why does a successful application need to be based on how convincing the call into vocational Christian work is? What if the potential worker does not have this calling to share but still desires to be a minister?

On the other hand, Chambers speaks out against the common sense of man which the “*wisdom view*” defends. He asserts that a call diligently sought from God and humbly received from Him has wrestled with all that God requires:

It is easier to serve or work for God without a vision and without a call, because then you are not bothered by what He requires. Common sense, covered with a layer of Christian emotion, becomes your guide... But once you receive a commission from Jesus Christ, the memory of what God asks of you will always be there to prod you on to do His will. You will no longer be able to work for Him on the basis of common sense.<sup>67</sup>

And over the course of serving God, the basis of this call will definitely be tested time and time again, either by oneself, Satan or the world. All these obstacles serve to deepen the conviction. When the minister is able to stand strong till the end against these trials and attacks, it is a testimony of God’s glory that the call is indeed from heaven.

---

<sup>65</sup> Garry Friesen, *Decision Making And The Will Of God: A Biblical Alternative To The Traditional View* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1980), 179.

<sup>66</sup> Friesen, *Decision Making And The Will Of God*, 318-319.

<sup>67</sup> Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publisher, 1992), March 4.

Unlike Friesen, many scholars like Blackaby, Guinness, and Smith concur with Chambers concerning the necessity of a call from God upon a person for vocational Christian ministry.<sup>68</sup> The three scholars agree that there are two basic calls of God upon a disciple for the purpose of accomplishing two critical missions, namely the call to discipleship and the call to vocation. However, their views differ concerning the names and definitions of these calls. Smith employs the terms “General Call” and “Specific Call”, Guinness categorizes them as “Primary Calling” and “Secondary Calling.” As for Blackaby, he does not classify the different callings. But God calls His people in Bible times and present age to accomplish His purpose and Blackaby highlights the sacredness of this specific call.<sup>69</sup> According to Guinness, the callings of God upon a person are all about living out His truths in his life that will bring congruence with God’s purpose for the person.<sup>70</sup> Both Guinness and Smith agree that there are two basic calls of God upon a disciple for the purpose of accomplishing two critical missions, namely the call to discipleship and the call to vocation. As for Blackaby, he classifies the calling to vocational Christian work as a specific, special and even high calling from God.

According to Friesen, the traditionalists (include Blackaby, Smith, Chambers and Guinness) are people who subscribe to the teaching about the calling of God. The “traditional view” states that finding God’s will for a particular matter is likened to a dot

---

<sup>68</sup> Douglas S. Huffman, ed., Henry and Richard Blackaby, Garry Friesen, Gordon T. Smith, cons., *How Then Should We Choose: Three Views on God’s Will and Decision Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009), 63; O. S. Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, (USA: Word, 1998), 31; Gordon Smith, *Courage and Calling*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> Henry T. Blackaby, Henry R. Brandt, and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Power of the Call* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 28.

<sup>70</sup> Guinness, *The Call*, 4.

of decision in a circle with all other options in place. But Friesen's "wisdom view" suggests that God's providence enables a certain degree of freedom for a person to discover what His will is. The advantage of the wisdom view over the traditional view is that it removes prolonged period of waiting and anxiety. It also eliminates confusion so as to liberate the person to discover God's will within the factors of love, humility, clear conscience, integrity, courage, etc.<sup>71</sup> To discover the will of God using the "traditional view" can indeed be difficult at times; however it teaches the believer to listen to God's voice and provides a great opportunity to build our faith in Him. Our relationship with God is rooted in Christ by faith; in the same way, all decisions in life are not made independent of faith. Friesen believes that the "traditional view" of seeking God's will is only applicable to major decisions in life, which to him includes the decision towards vocational Christian work.<sup>72</sup> He derived this conclusion as a result of his own personal example when he did not receive any calling from God in stepping into the ministry. A decision that is independent of the Spirit's prompting to enter vocational Christian work relies solely on human wisdom; it is a choice that is governed by sight and not by faith.

The lesson on how Peter trusted Jesus to walk on the waters is another good example (Matthew 14:28-34) to support the "traditional view" over the "wisdom view" of Friesen. When Peter looked at Jesus as the object of his faith with his spiritual sight, he was able to do the miraculous feat that no human strength could accomplish. But when the wind blew and the waves broke against his legs, Peter was distracted from his spiritual focus on Jesus and gazed instead at the elements of the storm. God's power immediately

---

<sup>71</sup> Friesen, *Decision Making And The Will Of God*, 156.

<sup>72</sup> Friesen, *Decision Making And The Will Of God*, 121 and 260.

vanished from him and he sank into the waters. How sad a story but it is a solemn reminder in understanding that the special calling of a minister is to be heeded by faith in God alone. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, which is to be a conviction of every believer and in the context of this study, every minister, is by no means a command that is to be fulfilled by human effort; it is a spiritual task which requires the help of God through faith.

### **Vocation Christian Minister**

What then is a minister of God? A Christian minister is like an envoy of God in the local church or Christian community. Depending on the affiliated denominations in a church setting, different titles are being used to denote this ambassador of Christ. Presbyterian and bishop are alternative terms used instead by the Presbyterians and Methodists respectively. Other denominations employ words like preacher, priest, clergyman, rector and parson.<sup>73</sup> A minister can also refer to a staff serving under the umbrella of a Christian organization such as a seminary or a mission agency. All these different titles fall short of some important key pastoral qualities of a minister. These various alternatives to the minister title either encapsulate the expectation of a minister from the community of people, from the minister or from God.<sup>74</sup> In some cases, the people's expectations of a minister actually differ from the minister's expectation of himself or herself. And it is of no surprise when these expectations are brought against

---

<sup>73</sup> Charles Edward Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd: The Privileges and Responsibilities of Pastoral Leadership* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2006), 13.

<sup>74</sup> Lecture notes from Dr. Kenneth Swetland and Dr. David Currie during the October 2013 residency class of a three-year Doctor of Ministry program (Pastoral Skills track) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The theme of that residency is "The Pastor/Minister as a Person."

and found to have fallen short of God's expectation of His own minister. The following looks at the expectation of a minister from each of these three sources separately and then all these three expectations will be placed side by side for further comparisons.

### Peoples' Expectation of a Minister – "Serve Me!"

The flock expects their spiritual leader to be able to feed and help them in time of need. A good example can be found from Moses' leadership. The Israelites expected him to be able to ask and receive everything from God including food to feed them and protection from their enemies (Ex 16:2-3). Generally, the people will look up and respect their minister. They have high regards for the minister and expect them to be super Christians with impeccable spiritual and emotional standings. This is especially the case for ministers who commence freshly from seminary and are beginning their pastorate in a new faith community. With the excitement of their acquired theological degree, they look forward to be the spiritual leader of the flock. However, the community under the leadership board is expecting to have a "doormat" pastor who is ready for them to step upon and to be their servant.<sup>75</sup> For some reason or other, the community already has a hidden job description for this minister that is not made known to the minister. Depending on how different the expectation of the minister is from that of the community, the unhappy consequence of unmet expectations can be imagined.

---

<sup>75</sup> Allan Hugh Cole, ed., *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians On Pastoral Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), 36.



### Minister's Own Expectation – “Lead You!”

On one hand, the people may assume that the minister is there to serve them. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to assume that the faith community, especially in Asia has a fairly high regard for their minister. They respect their minister for the fact that the minister is willing to forego a ludicrous career in the marketplace and have come serve them. However, this may prove to be detrimental as it may tempt the minister with power and prestige. Once the minister is not careful, he or she may fall into the trap and begin “bossing” the people. In the preceding example of a minister newly emerged from seminary studies, it is not uncommon to assume that this theologian minister cannot wait to lead the flock from the excitement which is accumulated and bottled-in during his seminary days. Also, in an affluent city like Singapore, there **are** an increasing number of ministers who were former professionals in the market place, so much so that these ministers’ strife for significance can be a potential issue. The danger lies in that they may lead the faith communities in the way that they have done in the corporate world. They use leadership principles of the world to lead the spiritual community of God.

Table 1. Expectations on a Minister from Two Sources

	1. Expectation from People	2. Expectation from Minister
Human expectation	“Serve Me!”	“Lead You!”
Worldly attitude	Demanding attitude – Minister to serve them like how a servant does in the world	Domineering attitude – Minister leads like how a market place leader does.
Possible effects on minister	Minister serves people grudgingly.	Minister leads without love.

## God's Expectation of a Minister

Table 1 shows the peoples' expectation of a minister and the minister's own expectation together. The community's "Serve me!" and the minister's "Lead you!" are dual expectations that can apparently complement each other. But the combination backfires when motives are self-centered and especially when both parties assume that they know each other's expectation. This tension can perhaps be resolved upon studying the biblical expectation of a minister. This can then help to correct the expectations of both the minister and the people so that they can better relate to one another. The expectation of God on the minister is discussed in a two-fold manner, namely the minister as a servant leader and the minister as a shepherd leader.

### **Minister as a Servant Leader**

The minister as a servant leader is not meant to remind the people that their leader is there to serve them for their sake, period. But it is to remind them that the minister is there to serve not because he or she has to but because he or she wants to (1 Pet 5:2). The heart behind the service is different from a typical servant who is paid or obliged to do the servant job. It is a minister who knows that though he or she is a leader, he or she stoops down and becomes a servant leader, a leader who serves. On the minister's side, it is a reminder that he or she is not there for man's significance but the glory of God as he or she appears in the limelight to preach sermons or conduct services.

Servant leadership can be learned from the perfect example of Jesus in Jn 13 when the master, to the surprise of the disciples, washed their feet. In the early days of Palestine, washing of feet was a meager task befitting the house slave when a guest steps

into the house.<sup>76</sup> This chapter can actually be the turning point of the gospel account in three ways. First, unlike the other three accounts that record the institution of the Lord's Supper on the evening before Jesus' betrayal, John chose the scene of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet. Second, the readers may anticipate a turning twist at this point when they read in verse one that Jesus was going to "now show them the full extent of His love."<sup>77</sup> Many other versions translate this phrase as, "Jesus loved them to the end."<sup>78</sup> Third, if this plot were to be made into a movie, the director will prepare his crew for the climax which is thought to be the death of Jesus at the Cross especially after what Jesus said in Jn 13:1 that He was going to love them to the end. But the verse was not followed by the scene at Gethsemane prior to the Cross; the scene instead unfolded with Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Though the feet-washing account is not the climax, it is nonetheless the turning point. The principle lesson behind Jesus washing their feet reflects what Jesus was going to do at the Cross. As a servant leader, the lowly task of feet-washing in Jn 13 exemplifies what Jesus who even though He is God, was going to humble Himself to die on the Cross for the salvation of the world.

### **Minister as a Shepherd Leader**

Jefferson feels that the word minister does injustice as to what this Christian leader should best be characterized. Just like the act of encouraging, the act of ministering

---

<sup>76</sup> George Raymond Beasley-Murray, *Word Biblical Commentary, John*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 36: 233.

<sup>77</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985), 1623.

<sup>78</sup> New International Version, New American Standard Version, New King James Version, Revised Standard Version and English Standard Version.

seems like a function that every believer in the community is able to do. It fails to differentiate “the leader from his followers and the general from his soldiers.”<sup>79</sup> Jefferson feels that the best English word is shepherd that he uses to entitle his book, *The Minister As Shepherd*. I agree with Jefferson that the word shepherd is more suitable than minister, but not for the reason that he gives. As the meaning of minister also refers to the leader or top official of a government, it still has the connotation that this person is set apart from the community to be their minister. However, the word minister is inadequate to capture the biblical expectation of what it means to be a spiritual leader in God’s kingdom. Its apparent meaning includes only the limelight type of duties such as preaching and priestly function but not the hidden tasks such as care giving and home visitations (in the context of a church community).

As a matter of fact, the word shepherd is synonymous to pastor. Though the pastor is an official title like the minister, a person does not need to be a pastor in order to be a shepherd. Regardless of whatever the faith community the leader belongs to, a shepherd’s heart is what it takes to care deeply for the people. Shepherd leaders know when to discipline wayward members in love and they know when to be gentle to wounded members as well. In the same way, these two characteristics are displayed in a family unit; every child needs both the gentle loving care of a mother and the firm authoritative figure of a father.<sup>80</sup> This model of shepherding can be seen through the writings in Acts and the Pauline epistles. Take for example the apostle Paul’s pastoral

---

<sup>79</sup> Jefferson, *The Minister as Shepherd*, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Timothy S. Laniak, *New Studies in Biblical Theology, Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible* (Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006), 20:247-48.

relationship with the Thessalonians. He is likened to an affectionate mother (1 Thess 2:7) and an instructing father as well (1 Thess 2:11) towards the flock at Thessalonica.

### Expectations On A Minister From All Three Sources

The second column of table 2 first shows the situation that when the people's expectation of the minister is brought against the biblical expectation of the minister, the "Serve Me" attitude of the people becomes an opportunity for the minister to learn what being a "Servant Leader" is all about. And when the people understand that the minister is a servant leader, they will not exploit and demand that he or she is to meet all their needs.

Second, the third column of table 2 also shows another situation that when the minister's own expectation of himself or herself is brought against the biblical expectation of the minister, the "Lead You" attitude of the minister is transformed into an opportunity to learn what being a "Shepherd Leader" is all about. And the minister understands that as a shepherd leader, it is wrong to lord over the people.

Table 2 also helps us to see how a minister may do well in one area but not on the other area while another minister may respond in vice versa. The table also enables us to realize that a minister is no different from any human being. Being a minister does not mean that he or she does not sin even though the minister may be more knowledgeable in spiritual truths. When I went for my residency studies in 2015 with the theme as "Pastoral Skills – The Minister as a Person", my heart resonated with what my professors, Drs.

Swetland and Currie often said, “Pastors/Ministers are like everyone else; only more so.”<sup>81</sup>

Table 2. Expectations on a Minister from Three Sources

	1. Expectation from People	2. Expectation from Minister
Human expectation	“Serve Me!”	“Lead You!”
Worldly attitude	Demanding attitude – Minister to serve them like how a servant does in the world	Domineering attitude – Minister leads like how a market place leader does.
Possible effects on minister	Minister serves people grudgingly.	Minister leads without love.
	3. Expectation from the Bible	
Biblical expectation	a. Servant Leader	b. Shepherd Leader
Transformed attitude	Minister serves as a servant leader. Minister serves people because he or she wants to and not because he or she has to.	Minister leads as a shepherd leader. Minister leads with love and not with tyranny.
Transformed minister	Minister serves people as a willing servant leader, unlike the world that only a servant serves his master.	Minister leads people as a caring shepherd leader, different from how a market place leader leads in the world.

## Conclusion

This chapter has deliberated on the terminologies of work, vocation and much attention has been given to vocational Christian work. As vocation means calling, one cannot deliberate about vocation without talking about the calling of God and especially the specific calling to vocational Christian work for the sake of this research. Though

---

<sup>81</sup> October 21 to November 1, 2013 first residency class of a three-year Doctor of Ministry program (Pastoral Skills track) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The theme of that residency is “The Pastor/Minister as a Person.”

both vocational Christian work and all other vocations in the market place are sacred, the function of ministerial or pastoral work is highlighted in view of the high moral, spiritual and theological standings that are required from the ministers. Moreover, even as the holy task of ministerial work can be daunting, it is nonetheless an awesome privilege to be called by our God and King to be His servants in a full-time capacity. These convictions form the key foundational bases for the next chapter to be built upon as the issues that either hinder or encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian workers are discussed. With the right understanding of these key terms in place, the next chapter surfaces some pertinent issues such as pride, faithfulness, people and dreams in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND PRACTICAL CONCERNS

PERTAINING TO LONGEVITY OF VOCATIONAL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

**Introduction**

“How long is long?” and “How short is short?” These are good questions asked by many ministers, including my supervisor when he asked about long service in vocational Christian work. Regardless of whether it is a pre-mature resignation of an unexpected nature or a resignation after a mutual agreeable term of service, it is nonetheless a loss of another worker in the harvest field. The most important asset of any organization is the employee.<sup>1</sup> It is the employees and not the other resources that bring out the vitality and help fulfill the mission of that organization.<sup>2</sup> Should efforts not be spared to encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian worker already in the field since Jesus sounded the call, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few” (Matt 9:37 NASB)? The call to mission has mobilized many to enter the front door of the church or mission agency to serve the Lord of the harvest. But the need to cut down attrition from its back door is equally essential so that all existing human resources could be effectively harnessed to accelerate the work of world evangelization.

Knowing when to leave a vocation is highly subjective but efforts can be made to dissuade the employee from quitting. Whether it is in a faith community or in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard G. Renckly, *Human Resources*, Barron's Business Library (Hauppauge, NY: Barron, 1997), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Ang Seng Chai, *Performance and Empowerment: Lessons in Leading and Motivating Employees* (Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1999), 3.



corporate world, what the human resource department of that organization can do is to award the staff with long service awards in order to encourage its staff to serve for a longer tenure. Longevity of vocational service is thus defined by length of service tenure and tangible means of award or recognition is used to encourage the employee to stay in the company for the longest period. In the case of the Jewish priesthood taken from the Scripture, a male Levite was officially ordained as priest when he turned thirty years old and the tenure for the priesthood lasted twenty years till he reached fifty years.<sup>3</sup> Though twenty years of priesthood might seem to be a considerable length of time or the longest working tenure of an employee is encouraged in the context of an organization mentioned above, longevity of vocational Christian service should not be seen only in terms of time. Instead, taking into consideration the meaning of vocation in chapter two and the immense need of vocational Christian workers in chapter one, it is suffice to conclude that any minister should prayerfully consider a life-long vocational Christian service.

Central to encouraging the longevity of service among vocational Christian workers is the importance to understand three contributing factors and three practical concerns that any minister may encounter in their vocation. The three contributing factors are related to the priority that the ministers place in relation to God, the Bible and their souls. The three practical concerns are related to the attitudes, interpersonal relationships and desires of the ministers.

---

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth L. Barker, *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1985), 1231.

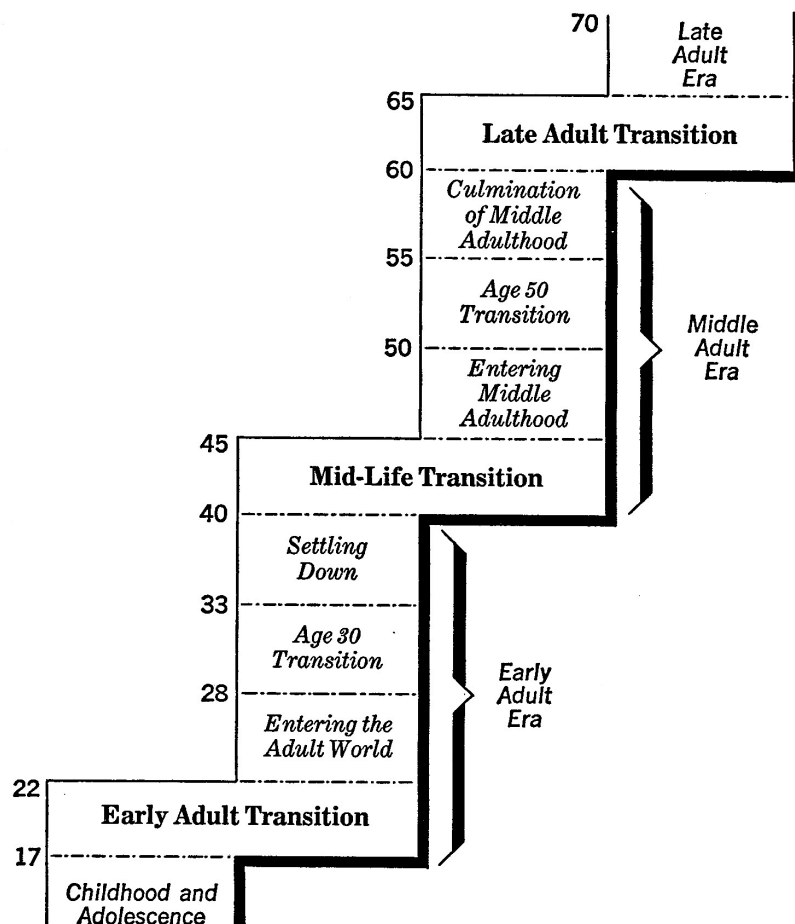
The following are the three main sections in this chapter:

1. The first section describes the different mindsets about ministry at different cycles of life and stages of vocation. The mindsets about ministry can vary from one minister to another minister depending on their physical age, the number of years they have been in the vocation and the lesson to be learned from God's vantage point. In general, there is a certain common pattern in each behavioral mindset and a reason that explains each mindset. Each different mindset can be attributed to where the minister is in a particular life cycle and/or a vocational stage that I will explain and give examples in the following first section.
2. The second section emphasizes three important factors that contribute to longevity of vocational Christian service. These factors are connected to the ministers' relationship with God, their spiritual disciplines in His Word and the care of their own souls.
3. The third section looks at three practical concerns that will either motivate the ministers towards serving for the long haul when these concerns such as the ministers' attitude in service, the relationship with people around them and their desires in ministry are handled appropriately. Otherwise, it may lead to the attrition of early or pre-mature resignations when any of these concerns were not addressed and they went out of hand.

## Mindsets About Ministry

In preventing ministry failure, it is helpful to understand that the mindset about ministry changes as ministers progress through life (cycle by cycle) and through their vocation (stage by stage). When the ministers are able to discern their own mindset and be honest before God whether the kind of mindset they have pleases Him or not, it will help to unravel their struggle and help them to take the necessary steps to correct any wrong mindset. One other assuring thought for the ministers is that they are not alone in facing this predicament. Other ministers who are in similar life cycle and/or vocational stage may also probably share the same struggle.

Figure 1. Levinson et al., *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 57.



## Cycles of Life

What are these cycles of life? This research uses the life cycle theory of Levinson (figure 1) that he writes in his book *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. Every human being is different in both physical nature and persona. The Psalmist attributes it to the fact that humans are wonderfully and fearfully created in their mothers' womb. (Ps 139:14) Also, their values and priorities in life can be different as well which lead them to behave differently when placed in any given ministry setting. Thus, depending on the person's age, mindset about ministry varies from one minister to another. Moreover, the ministry mindset of a minister changes too as he or she moves from one life cycle to another cycle.

Figure 1 also highlights the three different life cycles and the corresponding age groups: early adult era (age 17-40), middle adult era (age 41-60) and later adult era (age 61 and beyond).<sup>4</sup> It is being tabulated as follows:

Table 3. Cycles of life

Three Cycles of Life	Description of each cycle		Years (Age)
	i	Early adult era	17-40
	ii	Middle adult era	41-60
	iii	Late adulthood	61 and beyond

Transitions in between these life cycles are inevitable and these are reflected by the number of overlapping years (figure 1). The transitions are early adult transition (age 17-22), midlife transition (age 40-45) and late adult transition (age 60-65).<sup>5</sup> People in different adult eras (early adult, middle adult and later adult) encounter different set of

---

<sup>4</sup> Daniel J. Levinson et al., *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 18 and 20.

<sup>5</sup> Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, 57.

life issues. These issues faced by ministers in each category in turns affect their mindset of ministry as well. For those ministers in the early adult era (about age 40 or less), factors such as friendship, dating, engagement, marriage, family and singlehood are not uncommon.<sup>6</sup> For those ministers in the middle adult era (about age 41 to 60), issues such as health, marriage, family (both immediate and extended) and sex affect them significantly.<sup>7</sup> Because of major health concerns and reducing physical energy, ministers in the late adulthood (about age 61 and beyond) have to accept the fact that their contributions in the vocation are different from the way they once served in their early or even middle early adult era. Generally, people do not enjoy the transitional intervals between these life cycles as they often involve higher than usual levels of uncertainty and stress.<sup>8</sup> Yet, on the other hand, these can be viewed as opportunities for faith development as patience and perseverance are required on the part of the saints.

### Stages of Vocation

What are the stages of vocation? The four cycles of life use the biological age of the minister for demarcation while the three stages of vocation employ the number of years in the vocation for the demarcation. Also, while the first cycle of life begins from a minister 's early adult era, the first stage of vocation commences from the first year of vocational Christian work of the minister. In choosing the name for the three stages of vocation, I refer to Donald Super's five life and career development stages namely

---

<sup>6</sup> Charles M. Sell, *Transitions Through Adult Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 62.

<sup>7</sup> Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Waco, TX: Word, 1980), 255-57.

<sup>8</sup> Sell, *Transitions Through Adult Life*, 12.

“Growth” (birth-14), “Exploration” (15-24), “Establishment” (25-44), “Maintenance” (45-64) and “Decline” (65+).<sup>9</sup> As Super’s theory is both about life and career, his first and fifth stage thus marks the beginning phase, “Growth” (birth-14 years old) and ending phase of life, “Decline” (65 years old and onwards) respectively. Looking at his theory, the career of a person seems to be characterized by the middle three stages of “Exploration” (15-24 years old), “Establishment” (25-44 years old), “Maintenance” (45-64 years old). As the characteristics of these terms from Super’s theory also describe the three stages of ministers based upon the sequential periods of years in vocational Christian work, I decide to use the name of the middle three stages in Super’s theory as well for the names in the three stages of vocation in this thesis-project (table 2).

Table 4. Stages of Vocation

	<b>Name of stage</b>		<b>Years in vocation</b>
<b>Three Stages of Vocation</b>	i	Early stage (exploration)	First 5 years
	ii	Middle stage (establishment)	Next 10
	iii	Final stage (Maintenance)	16 and beyond

The first stage of vocation commences from the first year of the ministerial work. The three stages are the early or exploration stage (the first five years in the vocation), the middle or establishment stage (the next ten years) and the final or maintenance stage (sixteen years in the vocation and beyond). Based on the exit interview survey conducted by Cru Singapore over a period of five years, it was observed that 42 percent of the total

---

<sup>9</sup> Donald Super, “Developmental Self-Concept,” Careersnz, accessed October 22, 2016, <http://www.careers.govt.nz/assets/pages/docs/career-theory-model-super.pdf>.





number of staff who resigned had served up till five years since coming on staff. And 32 percent of those who left were the ones who had served from the sixth to and fifteenth year. The rest were staff serving from the twenty-first to thirty-fifth year. From these figures, it could be deduced that almost half of the total number of staff who left are in the early stage. It is noteworthy that the first five years of vocational Christian work is crucial towards the longevity of the vocational service. In this early stage of exploration, the ministers discover the nature and significance of Christian work as they put their hands to the plough. The experiences gained in the early stage will enable the ministers to build confidence and stability in the middle stage of establishment as the ministers have acquired the needful skills to handle the challenges efficiently in their vocation. The vocation in the final stage of maintenance can be a prime time for the ministers with over sixteen years of service when the employers are capable to deploy them in a role that they can serve effectively. Regardless of personal or ministry-related issues, both the ministers and the churches/organizations are to work closely together to help the ministers cross every milestone of their vocations. Some suggestions are given in chapter five of this thesis-project.

Now that the ministers' three cycles of life (table 1: early adult era, middle adult era and late adult) and three stages of vocation (table 2: "Exploration", "Establishment" and "Maintenance") are described above, certain significant observations can be made pertaining to the types of ministry mindsets a minister has at different specific life cycles and/or vocational stages. In his book *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation*, Kenneth Boa highlights two spiritual mindsets,

namely “doing” and “being” that ministers can identify in every life cycle or every vocational stage:

The world defines us who we are by what we do, but the Word centers on who we are in Christ and tells us to express that new identity in what we do. Being and doing are interrelated, but the biblical order is critical: what we do should flow out of who we are, not the other way around. Otherwise our worth and identity are determined by achievements and accomplishments, and when we stop performing, we cease to be valuable.<sup>10</sup>

Table 5. Keeping the mindsets in balance about ministry

	Descriptions		Years	Mindsets about Ministry	
				Doing (from strong to weak)	Being (from weak to strong)
Cycles of Life	ii	Early adult era	17-40		
	iii	Middle adult era	41-60		
	iv	Late adult era	61 and beyond		
Stages of Vocation	i	Early stage	First 5 years		
	ii	Middle stage	Next 10		
	iii	Final stage	16 and beyond		

The “being” aspect of the minister is about what their Master requires of them concerning the process of their ministry and the “doing” aspect of the minister is reflected as the product of their ministry.<sup>11</sup> The average ministers usually begin their vocational Christian work enthusiastically wanting to do more with their hands for God (which explains the trapezium with its longer parallel end at the top under the column “Doing” for both the rows of “Cycles of Life” and “Stages of Vocation”). And they may pay less attention to the being aspect of a minister (which explains the trapezium with its shorter parallel end at the top under the column “Being” for both the rows of “Cycles of Life”

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Boa, *Conformed to His Image: Biblical and Practical Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 270.

<sup>11</sup> Boa, *Conformed to His Image*, 267.



and “Stages of Vocation”). But as time passes or when they cross over to the next life cycle or vocational stage, the value of “being” catches their attention and they realize the need to balance between “doing” and “being” (which explains the trapezium with its longer parallel end at the bottom under the column “Being” for both the rows of “Cycles of Life” and “Stages of Vocation.”) And at this later cycle of life and later stage of vocation, it is inevitable that the ministers acknowledge the limitation of the “doing” aspect due to age or health reasons (which explains the trapezium with its shorter parallel end at the top under the column “Doing” for both the rows of “Cycles of Life” and “Stages of Vocation”). This is illustrated in table 3.

King Solomon was a fascinating example of a God-fearing leader whose early part of life was characterized by fabulous works of doing and later part, profound wisdom as he wrote about the aspect of being in Ecclesiastes. He was very capable of starting many initiatives and completing many projects within his lifetime (Eccl 2:4-9). The accomplishments of Solomon in itself received much praise from the world as the temple he built was attested as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But when it was viewed from the lens of the canonical book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon exclaimed, “Meaningless, meaningless, everything is meaningless!” (Eccl 1:2). The feats of Solomon could only be found meaningful when God was in it. He stated the purpose of his writing at the end of the book, “The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.” (Eccl 12:13-14) Though Solomon asked for wisdom and God granted it to him in his royal coronation, Solomon still did not finish well. His life had a sad ending. He had 700 wives, 300

concubines and many of these foreign dignitaries led him away from God (1 Ki 11:3). God punished him and his kingdom was divided.

Ministers have much to learn from Solomon regarding these two mindsets about ministry, the “being” and the “doing.” Putting the “doing” and “being” aspects of the ministers together, it is not as simple as just keeping one and rejecting the other. Under certain circumstances, wisdom is needed to discern God’s will concerning learning about the “being” or the “doing” aspects at different life cycle or vocation stage. But in some other situations, the Lord actually wants His servants to maintain a good balance of both. The following will explain table 3 and examine the “doing” and “being” aspects of the ministers in more details.

#### First Mindset About Ministry: “Doing”

From God’s vantage point, what does the ministry mindset of “doing” look like? The scope of world evangelization remains a daunting task for born again Christians worldwide. To hasten the Second Coming of Christ, efforts in accomplishing this mission of the church need to be accelerated as never before. As such, the essence of this vision requires the commitment and dedication of each and every disciple of Jesus Christ, fulfilling our responsibility either in being a sender or being sent into the harvest fields. However significant or meager the task may seem in reaching out towards a lost soul, it matters to that one soul just like it matters to the life of that one dying starfish under the scorching sun that a boy picks up from the beach after being washed ashore by a storm

and tosses back into the saving waters.<sup>12</sup> Some believers may be uncomfortable about setting numerical goals for a Christian organization to pursue, but the truth of the matter is that souls being saved into heaven's glory or being condemned into hell's damnation can be counted. It is just like the boy, who despite the massive number of dying starfish on the beach, picks up one after another and tosses them back into the waters. When a passerby ridicules him and asks as to how many of the creatures he can save, "It matters to this one," is the reply. Then the boy bent down, grabbed one more starfish and flung it into the seas. Preachers use this illustration to excite believers to increase mission efforts in view of a dying world. This "doing" mindset definitely has a place in the kingdom of God for some believers or ministers who have not given themselves wholeheartedly to the work of the gospel.

The uniqueness of God's community is that every believer is bestowed with spiritual gifts that can be used for His glory to further the cause of the gospel. In the body of Christ, some individuals are bestowed with gifts that center on the bible like preaching, teaching and exhortation; while the rest may be blessed with the gifts that contribute to the governing of the organization like leadership, administration and help. Scripture gives various lists of spiritual gifts (Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11; 1 Cor 12:8-11, 12:28-31 and 13:1-3). As time passes, the ministers discover and use those gifts that God has given them. But God's kingdom advances significantly when His servants are able to reach their potential by serving according to their gifting. The ministers put their hands to every opportunity of job functions within the churches or organizations. In so doing, spiritual

---

<sup>12</sup> Jack Canfield, "One At A Time," CYC-Online, accessed April 17, 2014, <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0302-starfish.html>.

gifts are surfaced and confirmed as the minister attempts new ministry initiatives. Spiritual gifts are generally discovered and confirmed by the first half of the minister's vocation.<sup>13</sup> Thus, it is valid for most ministers to have this ministry mindset of "doing" during this first part of the vocation so as to capitalize on this season of vocation when enthusiasm and energy levels are high.

### Second Mindset About Ministry: "Being"

Having considered the aspect of "doing", how and what does the season of "being" look like from God's vantage point? At a certain stage of the ministers' life, they will realize that it is not only the "doing" aspect of the gospel's work but also the "being" aspect of God's disciples that they should give attention to as well.<sup>14</sup> In striving for recognition and significance from the people around them, the ministers would perhaps err in seeking to perform and gain acceptance from their team members or leader.<sup>15</sup> Or perhaps the ministers have had an unhealthy self-image from young, thinking that God is pleased with their workaholic habits. It is commendable when believers strive and excel in their service for God, often involving sacrifices of one kind or the other. But it is a totally different matter when they are serving to gratify their fleshly or worldly motives. Regular self-examination is necessary to ensure that these selfish aspirations are not hiding behind the facade of Christian service. Thus, service to God that can be seen as the

---

<sup>13</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 38.

<sup>14</sup> Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Neil T. Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2013), 125.

outer “doing” aspect of the ministers must always be stemmed from and matched by the inner “being” condition of the heart.

It is by no mere coincidence that David in Ps 51:16-17 and Micah in Mic 6:6-8 share similar conviction. One was a king and the other, a prophet. Both of these Old Testament saints understood very well the important function of the earthly tabernacle with regards to the offering of animal sacrifices to God. Yet, without understanding the background from which these passages were written, readers might misunderstand that both David and Micah changed their convictions towards offering sacrifices to God in the temple. David would probably be well into the latter half of his life after fleeing for many years from the insecure King Saul and after fighting many wars for the kingdom. He had reached the peak of his reign and made such a reputable name in the course of history. Even the pagan world today could remember David’s greatness against the gigantic Goliath. David knew that the secret of his successful campaigns was in his communion with God through the Ark of the Covenant in the temple. It was there where the leader and people connected with Yahweh through the priest. After David slept with Bathsheba and killed her husband Uriah, he assumed that his public office could resume as usual. But God prompted the prophet Nathan to confront him on his hidden iniquities. It was then that David learned the painful lesson that God was concerned more with what went on in his inner life. God preferred “a broken and contrite spirit” than the ceremonial rites of animal offerings.

Just as the prophet Nathan confronted king David, the prophet Micah rebuked the entire kingdom of Judah for their apostasy and predicted that the Babylonians would destroy the nation in 722 B.C. It was in that context that Micah posed rhetorical questions

about sacrificing animals to God was useless though the sacrificial system was instituted under the Mosaic Law. Micah ended his exhortation by saying that in order for Judah to walk humbly before God, the Israelites had to “do justly and love mercy” (Mic 6:8 KJV). Once again in God’s eyes, external deeds of sacrifice lost its significance when sacrifice was done only for the purpose of external rituals.

It is often mentioned that there is a reason that man is not called a human doing but a human being and for that matter, a spiritual being as well.<sup>16</sup> The being part of a man can only be explained from the spiritual dimension. Pascal, the famous French scientist and philosopher said, “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing... It is the heart that perceives God, and not the reason.”<sup>17</sup> On the road to longevity of vocational Christian service, the ministers know very well that both their heart for God and their reason for ministry cannot be deemphasized. However, as “the main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing”, their love for God is always to be the utmost priority and the ministers have to guard it zealously.<sup>18</sup> This will prevent them from falling away from God and will help them uphold the name of God throughout their time in ministry. Their family and also their flock are also protected. They must not just be moved emotionally by the lyrics of the song “to love the Lord our God is the heartbeat of our missions,”<sup>19</sup> as the meaning of the song is anchored in the greatest commandment, “You shall love the

---

<sup>16</sup> Boa, *Conformed to His image*, 282.

<sup>17</sup> Marvin R. O’Connell, *Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 1997.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen R. Covey, A. Roger Merrill, Rebecca R. Merrill, *First Things First: To Live, To Love, To Learn, To Leave a Legacy* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 75.

<sup>19</sup> Song by Steve Green, *The Mission*, 1989.

Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matt 22:37 NASB)

### **Three Contributing Factors Towards Longevity Of Service**

This section explains three important factors that contribute to longevity of vocational Christian service, namely, the priority that the ministers place pertaining to God, the Bible and their souls. Ministers will agree that their spiritual intimacy with God, time spent in the meditation of God’s Word and the care of their own souls go a long way in enhancing the longevity of their service. The opposite is also true in disqualifying the ministers from their service when they fail to translate from what they believe are important about these three priorities into their weekly or regular schedules. In the long run, the ministers can be unknowingly serving God in their own strength instead (appropriate the promise in Neh 8:10 (NASB), “The joy of the Lord is your strength.”) In some cases, this is when burnout occurs while in other cases, the ministers may succumb to temptations and their integrity is compromised.

#### **Ministers And Their God**

The first contributing factor towards longevity of vocational Christian service is how the ministers view their relationship with God. Undeniably, this is the most important factor as it forms the foundation for an effective life long vocational Christian work. Though ministers often agree this is a significant factor in service, living out that belief does not match the conviction in their hearts. The priority of the relationship with God does not seem to rank the highest in the midst of a demanding ministry schedule.

Sadly, often times this all-crucial priority seems to be the first to be neglected when other important and urgent tasks demand the ministers' attention. Unlike the corporate leaders in the marketplace whose supervisors are visible, the ministers are spiritual leaders who are accountable to the invisible God who rules the heavens and the earth. The call to vocational Christian work originates from God and sustains by God. Regardless of whether a minister is a first or subsequent generation in his or her Christian home, self-examination is needful. This means how intimate the minister knows the God whom he or she serves. The commitment that God has shown to His people through giving and keeping His covenants cannot be taken for granted and undermined. This knowledge about God must flow from the head of the ministers to their hearts so that what is produced from their hands are fruits that will last (Jn 15:1-16).

An important feature of the Bible's teaching which teaches the believers the kind of God whom they worship, believe and serve is covenants. As the minister's relationship with God is the most important contributing factor to longevity of vocational Christian service, it is interesting to trace the way God established His relationship with key characters in the Bible at different times in human history. It baffles the mind to comprehend how God not only initiates the relationship, but He also seals the commitment with His people through the use of covenants.

A question was once asked in a Sunday school class, "Who crucified Jesus on the cross?" Out came the answer, "We did." All of us did. It was because of our sins that Christ was nailed to the Cross. In that sense, it begs the question: are we lovable? If we were God, we would find it difficult to love those who crucified Christ. But God is God. As He showed mercy to the wayward nation of Israel, His same attribute of mercy is



extended to us. With that understanding, we can live out a life that is characterized by the power of sins forgiven.

God's covenants with Abraham, David and His Church highlighted the sovereignty of God in making and fulfilling the covenants in His own timing. Under the Abrahamic covenant, God promised that the number of descendants of Abraham should be as many as the stars in the heavens and the sands on the earth. And in the Davidic covenant, God promised that just as the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, that would be the way that He multiplied the descendants of David. The messianic line of David led to the advent of the son of David, the Messianic king in the fullness of time. Thus, the Davidic Covenant linked the Old Testament to the New Testament with respect to how a covenantal God related to His people.<sup>20</sup> Present believers enjoy the fullness of the New Covenant till the day of Christ's second coming.

God's covenants help ministers to appreciate who God is and they will treasure His call and persevere to live out His call in their lives. Through these three covenants that God made with Abraham, David and His Church, ministers are reminded that God's love for them is everlasting and unending. The covenants are great reminders of a relationship that is ever enduring. The way that God bases the covenants with Abraham, David and His Church upon His own divine attributes will move the ministers not only to respond in worship to this eternal, covenantal God, but also in guarding their spiritual intimacy with Him at all times as an anchor to serve Him for the long haul.

---

<sup>20</sup> J. D. Douglas, *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1980), 330-331.

## Ministers And Their Bible

The second contributing factor towards longevity of vocational service is the priority that the ministers place on spending time with God in His Word. A non-Christian asked his Christian friend, “Since you keep telling me about God and how the Bible can teach me about God, have you finished reading the Bible from cover to cover?” How can he reply that he has not read the Bible once through? Perhaps a minister would have read the whole Bible, but does he or she not have a system to track it? There is a simple correlation between the ministers and their Bible. Sad to day, the flock and the ministers very often take the Bible for granted. This should not to be so for the ministers as it is the one thing they can do for their sheep: to diligently observe the spiritual discipline of spending time in the Word so that they can teach it well to their flock. Paul exhorts Timothy in 1 Tim 4:7 (NASB), “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” The Greek word for discipline, “gumnazo” does not just mean to exercise or train, but it also describes the intensity “to exercise vigorously, in any way, either the body or the mind; of one who strives earnestly to become godly.”<sup>21</sup> The English words “gymnasium” or “gymnastics” are derived from “gumnazo.” It is also interesting to note that the meaning of the root word for “gumnazo,” “gumnos” is “to train naked or wearing a loin cloth.” It is like what Heb 12:1-2 (NIV) says concerning the Christian race:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

---

<sup>21</sup> Strong’s, “1128. Gumnazo,” Bible Hub, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/greek/1128.htm>.

The writer of Hebrew is perhaps using the picture of an athlete in ancient Greek Olympics who trains very hard for the games. In order to edge out their opponents by the closest margin, they wear as little clothing as possible so that they are not weighed down. Hence it can just be a loincloth or they may even be naked.<sup>22</sup>

When Paul writes the epistle to his spiritual son, Timothy, the word “youthfulness” in 1 Tim 4:12 (NASB) may give the idea to readers today that Timothy is a young man, “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” But how old is Timothy when he receives this letter from his spiritual father? The Greek meaning of youthfulness in 1 Tim 4:12 does not have the same meaning as the English word for youth. In English, a youth is a person in his teens. But in the Greek culture, it refers to a man who is below 40 years old.<sup>23</sup> Paul probably leads Timothy to Christ in the first missionary journey when Timothy is in his late teens or early twenties. Then Paul gets Timothy to join him in ministry from the second missionary journey onwards. This letter is written after the third missionary journey that is about 14 years later after Timothy’s conversion. So, if Timothy, as a pastor who is approaching his mid-life has to be reminded by his mentor on spiritual disciplines, what more for Christian ministers who are in their thirties or younger?

The verse in 1 Tim 4:7 is a great reminder that observing spiritual discipline is the process towards godliness. Therefore, one very important thing that ministers can do for

---

<sup>22</sup> Strong’s, “1128. Gumnazo,” Bible Hub, accessed September 21, 2016, <http://biblehub.com/greek/1128.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Irenaeus II. 22.5 (according to Irenaeus, “Thirty is the first stage of a young man’s age, and extends to forty, as all will admit”) cited in John Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1996), 35; R. Earle comments, “The word for ‘youth’ (KJV) is *neotēs*, ‘used of grown-up military age, extending to the 40th year.’” in F. E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Ephesians through Philemon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 11: 374.

the people under their spiritual care is to guard their personal time spent in the Word. When they watch and guard this discipline as Christian ministers, their community can testify to the secret to their leader's godliness.<sup>24</sup> This becomes an excellent exemplary model of godliness from the shepherd leader to his flock.

### Ministers and Their Souls

While the first two contributing factors pertain to the ministers and their God and Bible, the third contributing factor points to the ministers' souls. Vocational Christian ministers are expected to reach out to lost souls directly or indirectly. Though the ministers have the same expectation on themselves, it is a reminder that their own redeemed souls needs to be looked into as well. A soul that is saved brings joy even to the angels in heaven. And a soul that is healthy not only delights God, but also the ministers, their family and the people around them. Regardless of the spiritual age of the Christian, all humans (both believers and non-believers) have emotional baggage that clutters the health of their souls. Degroat calls this as the "long and invisible bag we drag behind us."<sup>25</sup> The things people may have in their bag depends on their background which can be dated back to they were born to a recent event or crisis which was prolonged and not resolved. Another factor that can contribute to what is hidden in the bag is when a need is not being met over an extended period of time. Abraham Maslow

---

<sup>24</sup> Donald S Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life Study Guide* (CS: NavPress, 2014), 20-22, Kindle.

<sup>25</sup> Chuck DeGroat, *Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life -- Including Yourself* (Grand Rapids, MI Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014), 38.

categorizes these needs into the hierarchy of physiological, safety, belonging, esteem and self-actualization (or spiritual).

It is important to bring these contents out from the bag in a proper way and as soon as possible lest they begin to leak through the bag when triggered by certain situation in life. When this happens, the situation can be bad or even chaotic depending on the severity of the emotional issue. Some telltale signs of a hurting soul are obsessions, addictions, depression and anger.<sup>26</sup> These symptoms cannot be ignored or treated lightly as these are red flags seeking for help. Though Jeremiah describes the heart as “deceitful and desperately sick” (Jer 17:9 NASB), God has provided the following spiritual resources for ministers.

First, with the help of the Holy Spirit and journaling, the ministers can recall scripts from their past. Though they would be unable to rewrite their past, it will help them to overcome or break the influence these scripts have on their soul life.<sup>27</sup> A life map is helpful to recall how key events or crisis that happened in the past can affect their present self. These incidents might even have happened prior to their Christian conversion. One way of doing a life map is using time line which enables the ministers to see the different phases of life, vocation and ministry in comparison to their past.<sup>28</sup> Through the life map, the ministers can also track how they respond in certain milestones of their life, such as the integrity check, the obedience check and the Word check.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> David G. Benner, *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 233.

<sup>27</sup> Warren G. Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 1994), 67.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 39-55.

Second, the ministers are to begin to find a soul guide, be it their spouse or a good friend whom they can be honest with and who is willing to help them. A good question that the ministers can ask their soul guides is this, “How do you experience me?”<sup>30</sup> Being vulnerable to the soul guides who knows them reasonably well will help bring to the surface any emotional or psychological issues in these ministers’ lives. More often than not, a minister’s behavior at home speaks volumes on whether he has allowed these scripts in the past to affect him today.

Neil Anderson in his book *Victory Over Darkness* identifies the above issues faced by Christians as personal conflicts which he also describes it as “truth encounter.”<sup>31</sup> Christians or even ministers who might have known the Lord for many years do not know or live out their identity in Christ. They live in spiritual ignorance of who they are in Christ and fail to understand what Jesus says in Jn 8:32 (NASB), “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Anderson gives a comprehensive list of the spiritual blessings that believers enjoy, including their positions and privileges in Christ.<sup>32</sup> This resource book can teach ministers the need to identify the contents in their emotional bags and take for example, if the issue is anger which is a common struggle for many believers, the soul guides can lead the ministers in walking through the twelve steps towards forgiveness.<sup>33</sup> Other issues like security and significance that ministers

---

<sup>29</sup> Clinton, *The Making of a Leader*, 57-75.

<sup>30</sup> Degroat, *Toughest People to Love*, 145.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 45.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 45-47.

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, *Victory Over the Darkness*, 190, 192-195.

battle with can also be resolved by understanding and appropriating their true identity in Christ.

Thirdly, in view that some soul guides are not trained or their mentoring skills are limited, they can only listen and validate the emotional journey of the ministers. In cases like serious personality disorders, the help of mental health professionals should be consulted.

With the three factors explained in the above section that contribute to the longevity of vocational Christian service, the next section discusses three practical concerns that can either encourage or hinder the ministers from serving God for the long haul.

### **Three Practical Concerns Pertaining To Longevity Of Service**

While the previous section describes the three key factors that contribute to longevity of vocational Christian service, the following section deals with three practical concerns that can either encourage or hinder the longevity of the vocational Christian service. These three key concerns may hinder Christian ministers from serving for the long haul if they are not dealt with properly. On the other hand when ministers do not avoid but learn to confront these concerns, addressing these concerns may turn out to be blessing in disguise and building resilience in the longevity of the vocational service. The three concerns are related to attitude, people and ambition.

Each concern can become either an asset for encouraging longevity of vocational service or a liability leading to vocational attrition. A life skill is then defined as the way the ministers handle each pair of elements under each concern which will determine

whether the outcome will be a positive or a negative experience for them. First, the life skill concerning attitude enables the ministers to examine whether God wants to teach them about faithful or effective service at that particular season. Second, the life skill concerning relationships with people is to enable the minister to discern whether the people in their vocation are friends or foes so that they can relate to them appropriately. Third, the life skill concerning desires enables the ministers to know the expectations of personal aspirations and organization needs so as to make any decision accordingly. For each concern, it is not to say that any one of the two elements is negative in relative to the other or that it is bad to possess one of them over the other. Take for example, the significance of a minister can be a motivating force for the minister to push or excel in what he or she is doing. Yet, the element of significance can disqualify the minister when it becomes the driving force towards human pride rather than rendering all glory of God.

#### Ministers' Attitude: Faithfulness or Effectiveness

The first practical concern is the ministers' attitude. This section examines the two attitudes in service: faithful service and effective service. Are there any differences between these two perspectives concerning how ministers serve? As they seek to serve God for the long haul, does it matter whether the service is effective or is remaining faithful to their call in service the key as compared to fruit bearing in ministry. Present day churches are being influenced to adopt business type of operation to expand and be successful. There was a joke going around that if a church were to be run with all resources provided but without the Holy Spirit, the church could still expand and did not



even know the Spirit was not with them!<sup>34</sup> Suttle helps to keep these approaches to ministry in balance, “Faithfulness, not success is our goal... Results, success and effectiveness are nice when they happen, but they are not the primary pursuit.”<sup>35</sup>

As children of the Almighty God, it is a privilege to learn what faithfulness is all about from the One who is always faithful. There may also be a season of life where the servant learns the precious hallmark of being faithful to accomplish a task that God has entrusted it to him. A task from God does not mean the absence of obstacles. The obstacles may come from incompetent skills, interpersonal conflicts, overwhelming assignments or personal emotional issues. The irony is that the path that is strewn with roadblocks may perhaps be His curriculum to teach us about faithful service. The path of least resistance is often preferred over the path of greater resistance. Servants of God are at times, too quick to move out of this crossroad and step onto the easier path. To stay on the path of most resistance requires a persevering spirit even in the absence of seeing any fruit in ministry. The virtue of faithfulness can only be proven when the individual learns not to throw in the towel on the first onslaught of challenge or because they fail to see ministry growth in the first few years. The joy of it all is that as the minister adopts this fighting spirit in one difficult situation after another, a heart of resilience is being shaped.

On the other hand, fruitfulness in ministry needs to be placed into proper perspectives as well. The cultural mandate in Gen 1:28 states that we are to be fruitful and multiply. After washing His disciple’s feet at the Passover, Jesus exhorts them in Jn

---

<sup>34</sup> Tim Suttle, *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 25.

<sup>35</sup> Suttle, *Shrink*, 24-25.

15:5 that they are to bear much fruit. Jesus also uses the parable of the sower to illustrate that we are to be the good soil on which the seeds fall and grow to produce thirty, sixty, hundred times of crops (Mk 4:8). Paul commends the faith and love of the church at Colossae twice in the first chapter of the book (Col 1:6-10) by highlighting that the gospel is bearing fruit and growing there. On one hand, Jesus says in Jn 13:8 that God is glorified when we are able to bear not only fruit; but also much fruit. Yet on the other hand, there are Christians who feel (and I have a friend who has also voiced this) that bearing fruit is not essential in ministry; what matters most is being faithful to the task. They might even quote from the prophet in Hab 3:17-18, that we can still rejoice even when we do not see any fruit for God in our barns. But the context of the prophetic book was not on the subject of fruit bearing in our journeys of serving God; it was about the ability to still respond in faith towards seemingly unfair circumstances in life. The prophet was questioning God's way of handling evil in the days leading to the exile of Judah; it was all about responding to loss and suffering.<sup>36</sup>

How then does one reconcile this apparent paradox: to be both a faithful disciple and at the same time, a fruitful witness? It might be in the case of a missionary who had been laboring for years in hard ground attested to be the "missionary graveyard" – an area that had not seen any conversion for ages like in Japan. In such a situation when the servant testifies before God that all the efforts he has put in have been in vain to win any soul, a self examination of his own life in accordance with Galatians 5:22-23 should be

---

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Barker, gen. ed., *The NIV Study Bible – New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 1391.

considered. Is the fruit of the Holy Spirit evident in the minister's life – be it in his words or through his actions?

This highlights once again the differences between the doing and the being aspects of a servant. In his book, *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture*, Suttle challenges the mindset of pastors that faithfulness equates success in producing a mega church; instead faithfulness is an “active allegiance to the way of Christ” even to lead a shrinking church.<sup>37</sup> However, this active sense of faithfulness is not mediocre, but it perseveres over time and rides over struggles and failures until the will of God is proven.<sup>38</sup>

The lesson in the parable from Lk 19:12-27 illustrates that active faith is nonetheless necessary though ultimately, fruitfulness (or effectiveness) is under God's jurisdiction. A master who is a noble is about to embark on a journey to be enthroned as a king (Lk 19:12-14). Before he leaves, he appoints ten slaves and each slave is given a mina each to make business. A mina is one tenth of a talent. It is a Greek coin worth 100 denarii and is about 3 months of salary in those days. When the master, who was now king, returns, each slave gives an account of what happens to their mina and is expected to make some gain from it (Lk 19:15). The first slave is able to make a profit of ten minas from the one mina given and the master rewards this faithful servant by making him a ruler over ten cities. The second faithful slave makes a profit of five minas and he is rewarded with authority over five cities for his faithfulness (Lk 19:15-19). From these two servants, the litmus test in God's economy for the reward in faithfulness is not rest or

---

<sup>37</sup> Suttle, *Shrink*, 38

<sup>38</sup> Suttle, *Shrink*, 225.

lesser work. Instead, God rewards His faithful ones with bigger responsibilities. This may make some believers to rationalize that it is all right not to be faithful so as to have lesser responsibilities.

But the example of the third slave proves otherwise (Lk 19:20-27). This third slave keeps the mina in his handkerchief. The present concept of investment as wise stewardship is probably uncommon in ancient Palestine. The Jewish culture actually commends the burial of money or in this case, keeping it in the handkerchief as one of the safest ways of protecting it.<sup>39</sup> If the master is to have a reputation of being strict and harsh, this slave all the more does the right thing by safekeeping the mina and thus does not subject it to the risk of losing. Therefore the Jewish disciples may perhaps be taken aback to hear from this parable that this slave is being rebuked and his mina being taken away. It sounds harsh to be punished for doing something that is customary. However, the master has specifically ordered the slaves to do business and make profits from their mina. All except the third slave obey and follow the instruction to . Even if he can only make another mina out of the one mina he has, the master will probably also commend him as he does to the other two slaves. But he chooses not to. He is not trustworthy or unfaithful to multiply the mina that his master has entrusted him. In so doing, he is disobedient, not acting on what the master has instructed.

One application that can be learned from this parable is that faithfulness and fruitfulness (or effectiveness) are to go hand in hand. Some believers may disagree that fruitfulness is not essential as long as we stick to the task; stay put in that service and do

---

<sup>39</sup> David Allan Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 915.

it for a long period of time. The slave thinks that he is doing the right thing by just safekeeping the mina in his handkerchief. He will do well in this for as long as the master does not return. And the thing was, even when the master has returned, he still thinks that he is doing the right thing until his mina is taken away from him. The master has already expressed his expectation to the slaves that as he entrusts the minas to them, they are to put their mina to work. Observe the words that the master says to the slaves. He praises the first slave and probably the second one (Lk 19:17) as being good and faithful. The third slave is unfaithful. But note that he does not confront the third slave that he is unfaithful in contrast to the first and second slaves. Instead, he rebukes him calling him wicked (a person of having no good qualities) and the list of his other sins above. Faithfulness may not necessarily lead to the product of so-called success as in for example, the number of people saved, the number of people who come for a meeting – in other words, the numerical growth. But I believe that the process of that faithful service will bring about in our lives, as his servants, a change and transformation into Christlikeness. Unlike the third slave whom the master is displeased for being wicked, the fruit of our faithful service can also be demonstrated in the way we grow in our character as well as our faith in God. Therefore, in this way, it is not wrong to say that Jesus expects us to bear fruit as we serve Him faithfully.

The series of events that led to the world's first heart surgery was a true story that illustrated how faithfulness and fruitfulness can co-exist. November 29, 1944 was a day the world would remember: two men created history in medical science by performing

the world's first heart surgery known as the Blue Baby operation.<sup>40</sup> A black laboratory assistant named Vivien Thomas had been working for a white doctor named Dr. Alfred Blalock since 1930. The doctor recognized the great potential of Vivien in the medical arena. True enough, on this historic day during the surgery and at the request of Alfred, Vivien stood on a step stool behind the doctor and coached the doctor Alfred on every procedure for the operation of “a blue baby” – a baby with congenital heart problem. A laboratory technician was coaching a famous and very experienced doctor. Being black and without a doctorate, Vivien's significant efforts were not recognized until 1976. Upon the strong recommendation of prominent doctors around the country who had previously been trained under him, the hospital university board eventually made a decision. Vivien always wanted to become a doctor all his life but he was not able to in view of the stated life circumstances. But his dream finally came true after forty-six years and his faithful contribution to the work of heart surgery was recognized near the end of his life. It was spectacular and moving as we watched how the people recognized his accomplishment at the end of the movie.

When ministers respond to God's call to be faithful and to remain His faithful servants, the standing ovation given to Vivien receives on earth will be nothing as compared to what will happen to the ministers on the Day of Judgment. The applause from heaven and the recognition from God Himself is what that matters, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

---

<sup>40</sup> John Hopkins Home, “The History of Heart Medicine at Johns Hopkins,” Johns Hopkins Medicine, accessed September 20, 2016, [http:// www.hopkinsmedicine.org/stlm/history.html](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/stlm/history.html).

## Ministers' Relationship With People: Friends or Foes

The second practical concern leading to longevity of vocational service has to do with interpersonal relationship skills. This life skill about relationship with people enables the ministers to identify whether the people in their vocation are friends or enemy. And even if they are perceived as their foes, acquiring this life skill helps the ministers to relate to both of them accordingly. Using the principles from 1 Cor 12:12-27, this section hopes to help the ministers evaluate and improve on the network of relationships in their own life. A minister needs to be reminded that besides himself, the people around him play a vital role in encouraging longevity of vocational service. His spouse, family and the community are keys to a satisfying and fulfilling vocation. It must not be forgotten that should the minister quit, these individuals may also be adversely affected.<sup>41</sup>

Unwillingness to forgive and bitterness wear a person down tremendously and may cause a minister to quit abruptly. According to a survey done by Price Waterhouse Coopers, pay and benefits were not usually the main reasons why employees leave, one key reason for employees' resignation is the lack of good relationship with their supervisor.<sup>42</sup> Christian ministers too tend to underestimate this interpersonal relationship issue. In Asian culture, the response to managing conflict is withdrawal. Though we acknowledge that conflicts are common to humans and inevitable, our detrimental mindset makes us take a step back and hope that time would subside and erase all hurts

---

<sup>41</sup> Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007), 9.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Tate, "Retaining Skilled, Trained Workers," *Financial Executive* 23, no. 5, June 2007: 16.

and misgivings without any need for us to resolve the issues intentionally. All too often, the line is not drawn clearly concerning the cultural and biblical views of resolving conflicts.

To illustrate, one senior leader once acknowledged in a church service that there was considerable unhappiness in the congregation over the resignation of several leaders. He was right to say that they or the parishioners should not leave the church as they would be merely bringing this emotional baggage to another church and recurrence may result in a matter of time. But there was nothing said about resolving the conflict that led to this unhappiness other than to resign to the cultural norm of letting wounds heal by themselves over time. This episode of disagreement was not the first in the church. While some members have left the church before, many who remained have become passive in their service to God.

No church on earth is perfect; but one that adopts this style of conflict management has just added to the list of unhealthy churches, waiting for the coming Groom to judge. This incident about interpersonal relationship issues is a common occurrence in every organization. Regardless of whether he or she is the offender or the victim, the minister has to appreciate and adopt the method of conflict management as stated in the Bible (Matt 5:23-24, 18:15-17, 21-22; Col 3:13; 1 Tim 5:19).

Disagreements and conflicts are also not uncommon in the bible. Some examples are Adam and Eve, Joseph and his brothers, David and Saul, David and Absalom, Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, Paul and the church at Galatia. Conflict resolution is challenging in any of God's community. During one of my residency classes at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Dr. Kenneth Swetland, professor and author of *Facing*



*Messy Stuff in the Church* explains that the reason is because there are actually four types of people who view and deal with conflicts differently.<sup>43</sup> Firstly, there are those who think that once a relationship is broken, it cannot be fixed, Secondly, those who think that when it is broken, it can be fixed. Thirdly, those who think that the relationship is not broken at all, so it does not need fixing. And fourthly, there are those who, when the relationship is not broken, decide to break it themselves. Therefore, it is vital that ministers need to learn not only about themselves, but also about the people around them and how to relate to them in the best possible way.

In his book *Toughest People To Love*, Degroat identifies personality disorders as the possible reason for the people above to view conflicts differently. In his years of counseling pastors and ministers, he identifies several major personality disorders of parishioners that vocational Christian workers have to face.<sup>44</sup> When they learn to discern the different types and symptoms of personality disorders, this useful knowledge will help them identify the underlying cause of the parishioners hurting other people and still love these “unloveable” parishioners. Degroat concludes by cautioning that the purpose is not to label individuals in their personality disorders but to shepherd these people in their troubled souls.<sup>45</sup>

Besides the need to ascertain whether their parishioners have any form of personality disorders, the ministers have to find out whether it was they themselves and not only the people in their vocation who are suffering from any of the above personality

---

<sup>43</sup> Dr. Kenneth Swetland’s class notes, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, D.Min. October 2013 residency.

<sup>44</sup> DeGroat, *Toughest People to Love*, 46-65.

<sup>45</sup> DeGroat, *Toughest People to Love*, 65.

disorders. It requires intentionality on the ministers to find out whether they are the one who need help. However, if the people and not the ministers are the ones who have personality issues, and these individuals are unable to receive any treatment to help them for whatever reason, the ability of the ministers is necessary to know about these unique personality situations so that the ministers can explore ways how to help them.

As every minister and every person in the minister's vocation have different personalities that may not be severe personality disorders, the following are some biblical principles for ministers in relating to people. The English word "honor" is often used in relation to one who is higher in some kind of authority and the meaning denotes respect. This is exactly reflected in one of the Ten Commandments - to honor one's parents (Ex 20:12). But are we to honor only those who are in authority over us? Rom 12:10 (New International Version) gives the instruction to honor fellow believers in the Lord. "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves." The New American Standard Version reads, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor." The meaning of giving preference is to outdo or lead the way in honoring one another. Thus, the idea is to "be eager to show respect to one another."

1 Cor 12:12-27 teaches some practical steps as to how this can be possible. The context in 1 Cor is similar to that of the preceding Rom, which is the exercise of gifts in the body of Christ. Here in 1 Cor, Paul explains in the same way that there are different parts that make up a human body, so there are different members that constitute the body of Christ (1 Cor 12-14). There are some observations that can be drawn through the body parts about honoring one another. First, in 1 Cor 12:15-17, Paul highlights those parts of

the human body that are inferior in comparison to other superior parts, namely foot to hand, ear to eye and ear to nose. Within these three verses, there are four occurrences indicating that the weaker parts may be weaker but are still necessary (1 Cor 12:22), the less honorable parts that are deemed more honorable (1 Cor 12:23a, 24b) and the unseemly come to have more seemliness (1 Cor 12:23b). Four times! Second, after repeating the theme: many members, one body (1Cor 12:18-20), Paul now mentions about the two categories of the human body in vice versa, namely eye over hand and head over feet (1 Cor 21). And in 1 Cor 12:24, he only says once that the seemly part have no need of honor. Third, Paul concludes in 1 Cor 12:25-26 that all the parts of the body are to be united so that they share the same care for one another, all suffer when one suffers and all rejoice when one is honored. Thus, the verses in Rom and 1 Cor are key to acquiring the life skill of people.

As people are human beings with feelings as well as their own emotional baggage, there will be different levels of tensions when they interact and work together. Besides the need to entrust these relationships to God in prayers, the ministers themselves are to be intentional in their efforts to sharpen each other as iron sharpens iron (Prov 27:17) and not to become porcupines constantly poking one another.

### Ministers' Desires: Aspiring Needs or Unfulfilled Dreams

The third and final practical concern to address longevity of vocational Christian service uses the life skill about desires. This third life skill about desires enables the ministers to address both their desires to fulfill their own personal dreams as well as the expectation to meet organization needs. This will be discussed and illustrated through the

lives of Moses and Ezekiel. Ambitions or dreams are likened to a person's vision of what he hopes to see in the future concerning his life or his ministry. An unfulfilling job is one significant factor that contributes to the attrition rate in Christian ministry's work force. There are several reasons why the ministers does not experience fulfillment in their ministries. The common one is the inability to maximize one's potential as they struggle in an ill-fitted job and become under-challenged. They actually desire to be passionate about their work; but they find themselves plateauing<sup>46</sup> instead. It may also happen to mid-life ministers who are struggling with assignments that do not employ their spiritual gifts. The excitement for ministry and the adrenalin in service are no longer there. In such circumstances, the wisdom of God and His Spirit's prompting are necessary before these ministers jump to dire conclusion. On one hand, the ministers know that churches or organizations are not liable to provide them with good ministry fittings that match their passions and gifting. Yet, on the other hand, their frustrations concerning any ill-fitted jobs demonstrate otherwise; they assume that it is their right to demand a good job fit from their leaders. In order to liberate them from any further negative thoughts, they need to be reminded that when they are being given excellent assignments that match their expectations, these are blessings from God and not personal rights received.

Moses is a sad but a good example of long service unto death, even without seeing his wish being fulfilled. The readers may pity the patriarch for being so close to his wish as he is literally at the doorstep of the Promised Land. Yet he is unable to enter.

---

<sup>46</sup> Richard Clinton, Paul Leavenworth, *Starting Well: Building a Strong Foundation for a Lifetime of Ministry* (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1994), 19. Richard Clinton quotes from Robert J. Clinton from the latter's *Clinton Biblical Leadership Commentary*. Article can also be found at J. Robert Clinton, "Thee Articles About Finishing Well," accessed September 10, 2016, <http://garyrohrmayer.typepad.com/files/3finishwellarticles.pdf>.

The warning that sin will catch up on a person is evident in the fact that it is his disobedience that denies his entry into the land. Though Moses only sees the Promised Land on earth from a distance when he is alive, he is seen basking in the heaven's glory of Jesus at the Mount of Transfiguration more than a millennium years later. In Moses' case, though he misses out on the conditional Mosaic covenant in being unable to enter the Promised Land, he is seen in heaven because of the general New Covenant. But what happens when dreams are no way in sight to becoming true? In such situations, the prayer of serenity is a good antidote, "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."<sup>47</sup> To stay for the long haul in ministry is not about acquiring wisdom to know the difference, but the ability to discern His will in whether to accept or to change the circumstance. As the ministers seek God's will and feel that the decisions are to stay where they are, they can depend upon His grace to be faithful and bloom where they are planted. However, in situations when the ministers decide to resign, let the peace of God prevail over them as they take the step of faith to move out and on to a new direction of ministry.

Unfulfilled dreams on earth expire when we are promoted into everlasting glory. What matters at the end is the commendation from Jesus in heavens "Well done, good and faithful servant." While we are sojourners on earth with this hope embedded in our convictions, we are therefore able to let go and let God. Instead of turning away from faith because of unmet expectations, we need to walk away in faith in spite of unfulfilled

---

<sup>47</sup> The Serenity Prayer by Reinhold Niebuhr, cited in John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature*, 18th ed. (New York: Little Brown, 2012), 695.

dreams.<sup>48</sup> In the event that the ministers are unable to acknowledge the stark reality of unmet expectations, they may be tempted to quit their vocation especially on the onslaught of insurmountable turmoil.<sup>49</sup> The following are some recommended measures that may help ministers to prevent or handle unfulfilled dreams.

First, just as in any vocation, if Christian ministers are not given their job descriptions or are unclear about what are expected of them in their new roles, they should not hesitate to clarify with their leaders or the board. When there are no proper and mutual agreements on the job expectations, one common frustration that the ministers will face in their course of work is that instead of being spiritual facilitators that they wanted, they end up being program facilitators, or vice versa.<sup>50</sup> Through the job descriptions, the ministers will then be able to understand the church or organization demands from them. Then, having a good knowledge of their own strengths and shortcomings, these information about themselves will better prepare them on how they can best approach the work assignments that are given to them.

Second, throughout the ages of time in history, there are examples contrasting the wisdom of God against the foolishness of man. This section explores one example in the Bible history (1 Cor 1:18-31) concerning both the Jews and the Gentiles that highlight the weakness and foolishness of man respectively in comparison to the power and wisdom of God. These are the two people groups that dominate the unfolding of the gospel story in

---

<sup>48</sup> David W. F. Wong, *Finishing Well: Closing Life's Significant Chapters* (Singapore: Finishing Well Ministries, 2007), 106.

<sup>49</sup> Wong, *Finishing Well*, 182-183.

<sup>50</sup> Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994), 174-182.

the New Testament. The Jews had been waiting for the coming of the Messiah based on what the prophecies in their scriptures. During Jesus' time, they did not think that Jesus was the promised One as they believe that their Messiah would come in power to thwart the Romans' reign over them. Jesus could not be the Messiah then as his life began in a carpenter's family and ended at the despicable criminal cross. That was the reason that whenever the Jews came to Jesus, they asked Him for signs and miracles as proof of His deity. Jesus knew their disbelieving hearts regardless of whether they had witnessed these signs or not. The gospel was then extended to the Greeks whose culture and intellect stood out as more superior than the rest of the world. The concept of university education today originated from the early Greek's philosophy. For these reasons mentioned, 1 Cor 1:22-24 then states, "For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Therefore on one hand, the crucified Christ is a foolish message to the Greeks and demonstration of weakness to the Jews, yet on the other hand, the message of the cross is the wisdom and power of God to those who receive it in faith.

As illustrated above in how people can view Christ differently, the ministers will feel liberated when they can view difficult situations in ministry as unfulfilled dreams in their life. They may not understand and even be confused as to why God withholds this desire concerning their life or their ministry but they can nonetheless acknowledge that it is the will and wisdom of God that this happens.

Ezekiel (meaning "God strengthens") was an example of such a person who chose to obey God. Although he was a priest (Ezek 1:3), God called him to be a prophet and he

served in Babylon for 22 years. Ezekiel, born and raised in the land of Judah, was preparing to become a priest in God's temple when the Babylonians attacked in 597 BC and carried him away along with 10,000 other captives (2 Ki 24:10-14). The nation was on the brink of complete destruction. Four to five years later, when Ezekiel was thirty (the normal age to become a priest), God called him to be a prophet.<sup>51</sup> During the first six years when Ezekiel ministered in Babylonia (Ezek 1:3), Jeremiah was preaching to the Jews still in Judah, and Daniel was serving in Nebuchadnezzar's court. The Kebar River connected to the Euphrates in Babylonia and was the location of a Jewish settlement of exiles. Ezekiel, a priest turned prophet, used his former training and knowledge as a priest to write the final nine inspiring chapters (chapters 40-48) on matters pertaining to the temple, a genre that a prophet by training would be unable to do. From chapters 1-39, Ezekiel explained the reason why Judah would be punished, why Judah's enemies would be judged and how Judah would be finally restored was so that "all will know that He is the Lord." This phrase, "so that you will know that I am the Lord" in the different variations appear sixty five times and becomes the theme in this prophetic book.<sup>52</sup>

It is an excellent idea that personal aspiration can be actualized within the scope of the organizational goals. In the event that it is not possible, this section has tried to help the ministers by giving some biblical examples and new insights as to how they can best maneuver within their unique situation. In summary, the life skills for longevity of

---

<sup>51</sup> Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary, Ezekiel* (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 21; Kenneth L. Barker, *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 28:1231.

<sup>52</sup> The references are 6:7,13,14; 7:4; 11:10,12; 12:20; 13:14,21,23; 14:8; 15:7; 20:12,20,26,38,42, 44; 22:16; 23:49; 24:24,27; 25:5,7; 28:22; 35:4,9,15; 36:11,23; 37:6,13. First time is mentioned in chapter 20 and the chapter has six occurrences.



vocational Christian service are needed to address practical concerns such as faithfulness or effectiveness, friends or foes and personal aspirations or organization needs.

## Conclusion

Without proper self-care and organization care, Christian ministers face ‘blackout’, ‘brownout’ or ‘burnout’.<sup>53</sup> As the saying goes “Prevention is better than cure” and in order that churches and Christian organizations not regret for not having done something earlier before their next worker resigns, prevention efforts are to be stepped up now in preventing further attrition. In his book *Preventing Ministry Failures*, Wilson highlights several reasons ministers “burnout” (physical, emotional and spiritual exhaustion which lead to fall out from vocation).<sup>54</sup> Some of these reasons are included in this chapter as I explained the three contributing factors (namely the priority ministers place in relation to God, the Bible and their souls) and three practical concerns (attitudes, human relationships and desires of the ministers) for longevity of service among vocational Christian work. But in some cases, these ministers and the people around them could actually observe that the ministers are already in “brownout” (physical, emotional and spiritual tiredness over a prolonged period) condition. And when proper attention is given to them during this time, the ministers can be rescued from the painful consequences of “burnout.”

---

<sup>53</sup> Lecture notes from Dr. Kenneth Swetland and Dr. David Currie during the October 2013 residency class of a three-year Doctor of Ministry program (Pastoral Skills track) at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The theme of that residency is “The Pastor/Minister as a Person.”

<sup>54</sup> Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 9.

The research behind chapters 1, 2 and 3 of this thesis-project has helped to spell out clearly how to encourage longevity of service among vocational Christian workers. Chapter four utilizes these research materials to design a course curriculum as the practical project in how to encourage this longevity of service among church leaders studying at the extension center of EAST in China.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROJECT DESIGN

#### **Introduction**

The thesis-project is to design a course syllabus to be taught at East Asia School of Theology. The purpose of the course is to teach the seminarians about longevity of vocational Christian service. The course will benefit all Christian ministers (church pastors and para-church workers). But it is also suitable for lay leaders who have been actively serving God but would like to know and explore what vocational Christian work entails. The course will examine and draw out biblical principles from the topics about vocational Christian work, ranging from the call of God to longevity of the vocational service.

This chapter presents a syllabus that is revised from the initial one used in September 2015. This latest syllabus is a culmination of the lessons that I have learned from the three years of studies at GCTS under the following themes “Deepening the Call”, “Caring for the Flock” and “Proclaiming the Word.” They are formerly termed as “The Pastor as the Person”, “The Person as the Caregiver” and “The Pastor as the Preacher” respectively.<sup>1</sup> The content of the syllabus course also incorporates my years of meditations on Scripture as well as my own personal journey as a Christian minister.

During the faculty development week in May 6-8 2015, Perry Shaw conducted a workshop entitled “Intentionality in Theological Education.” He taught from the

---

<sup>1</sup> Three-year distant education Doctor of Ministry program with Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary under the track title “Pastoral Theology in Practice”, formerly “Pastoral Skills.”

principles written in his book on how to design a course with outcome-based education in mind.<sup>2</sup> That workshop and his book were very good resources in helping me revise the first syllabus. In addition, the development of research under the instruction of my knowledgeable supervisor helped make the revised syllabus much better than the original one.

As a part of encouraging longevity of service among vocational Christian workers studying at East Asia School of Theology is the importance of creating a course syllabus which will address the issue. Therefore, the plan of this thesis-project is to design a revised syllabus for this course so that it can be taught as one of the courses under “Leadership and Formation” studies at East Asia School of Theology (EAST). The title of the course is “Being A Christian Minister” and it teaches on the longevity of service among vocational Christian ministers.<sup>3</sup> The course will examine and draw out biblical principles about vocation and in particular vocational Christian work. It also teaches on topics that encourage longevity of vocational service and address issues affecting the minister’s commitment to serve God for the long haul.

First, this chapter will begin by presenting some survey findings from the exit interview data collected by Cru Singapore. Second, this chapter will share how the first syllabus for the EEC course is being created. Third, using the EEC course evaluation from the class and the feedback from EAST principal, applying the principles learned about intentionality in theological education and incorporating the additional research material through writing this thesis-project, the chapter will discuss how that first

---

<sup>2</sup> Perry Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2014), 143-153.

<sup>3</sup> A course offered under the Leadership and Formation course category LF506 of EAST “Being a Christian Minister.”

syllabus can be improved. Finally, the revised syllabus will be presented at the end of this chapter.

### **Exit Interview Data Analysis**

This survey was taken from the sixty-six vocational staff workers of Cru Singapore who resigned between December 2008 and June of 2013. The data sample was collected from the information that these staff worker provided in the exit interview form and the data was analyzed in August 2013. One limitation of the study was the level of vulnerability of these workers in providing the information honestly. But this survey was helpful to understand the mindset of vocation as written in chapter two of this thesis-project.

Figures 2 and 3 reflect the staff in the different categories according to their length of years. Figure 2 shows the number of staff members according to their years of service. Figure 3 shows the percentage of staff members according to their years of service. From figure 3, it is noteworthy that the highest percentage of 42% (27 staff) left the organization during the first five years. This was called the early stage of vocation as mentioned in chapter two. And those in the middle stage of vocation who left in their 6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> year added up to the next highest 32% (24 staff). The remaining 26% were in the final stage of vocation, consisted of those who had been on staff for 16 years and more. Figure 4 shows the reasons for leaving and they were listed in ascending order of score.

It could be observed that different categories of staff members viewed vocation differently based on the stage of vocation that they are in. First, younger staff members who had served for 5 years and less, 5 out of 27 staff members indicated they might still

be serving in vocational Christian work. But 14 wrote about God’s calling to serve in either vocational Christian work or the marketplace.

Figure 2. Years On Staff (In Numerical Value)

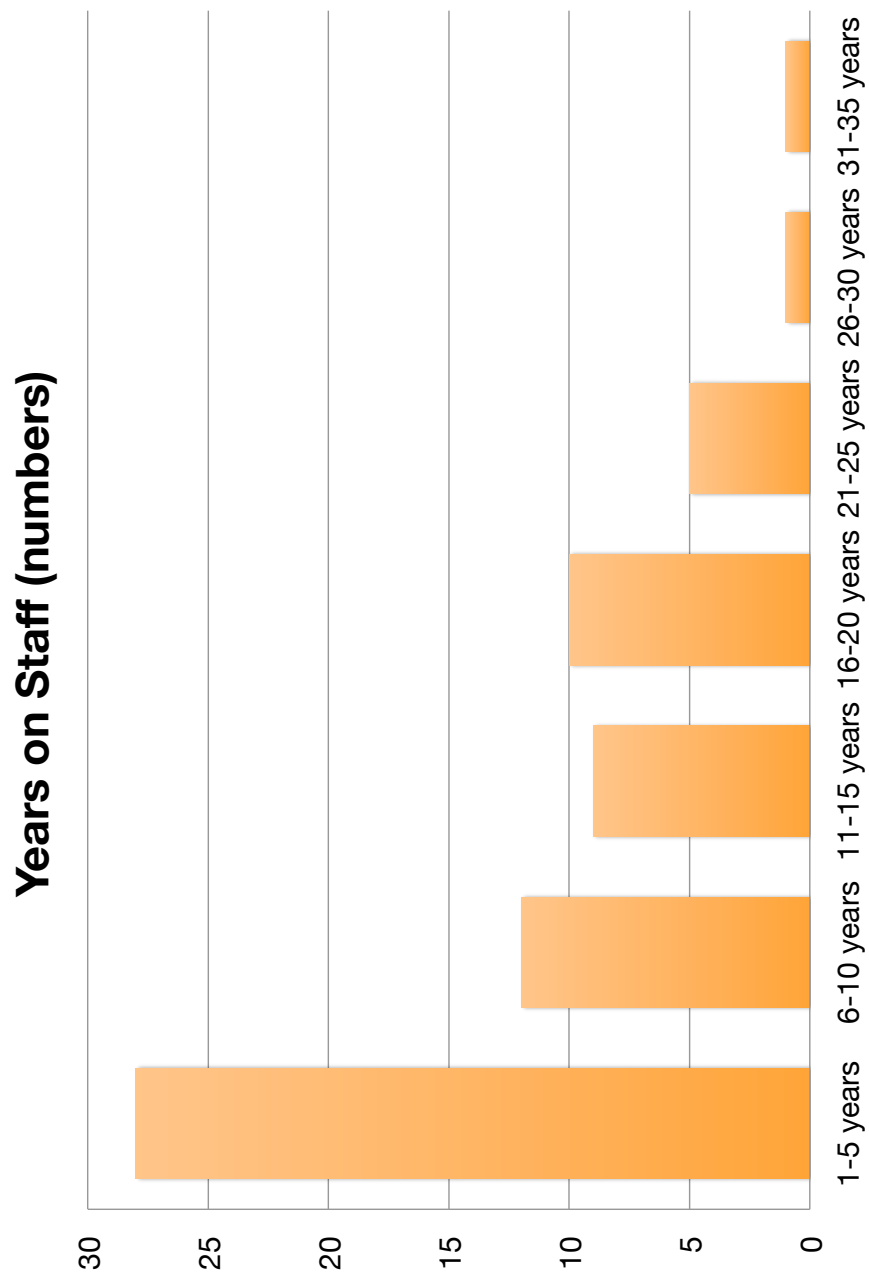


Figure 3. Years On Staff (In Percentage)

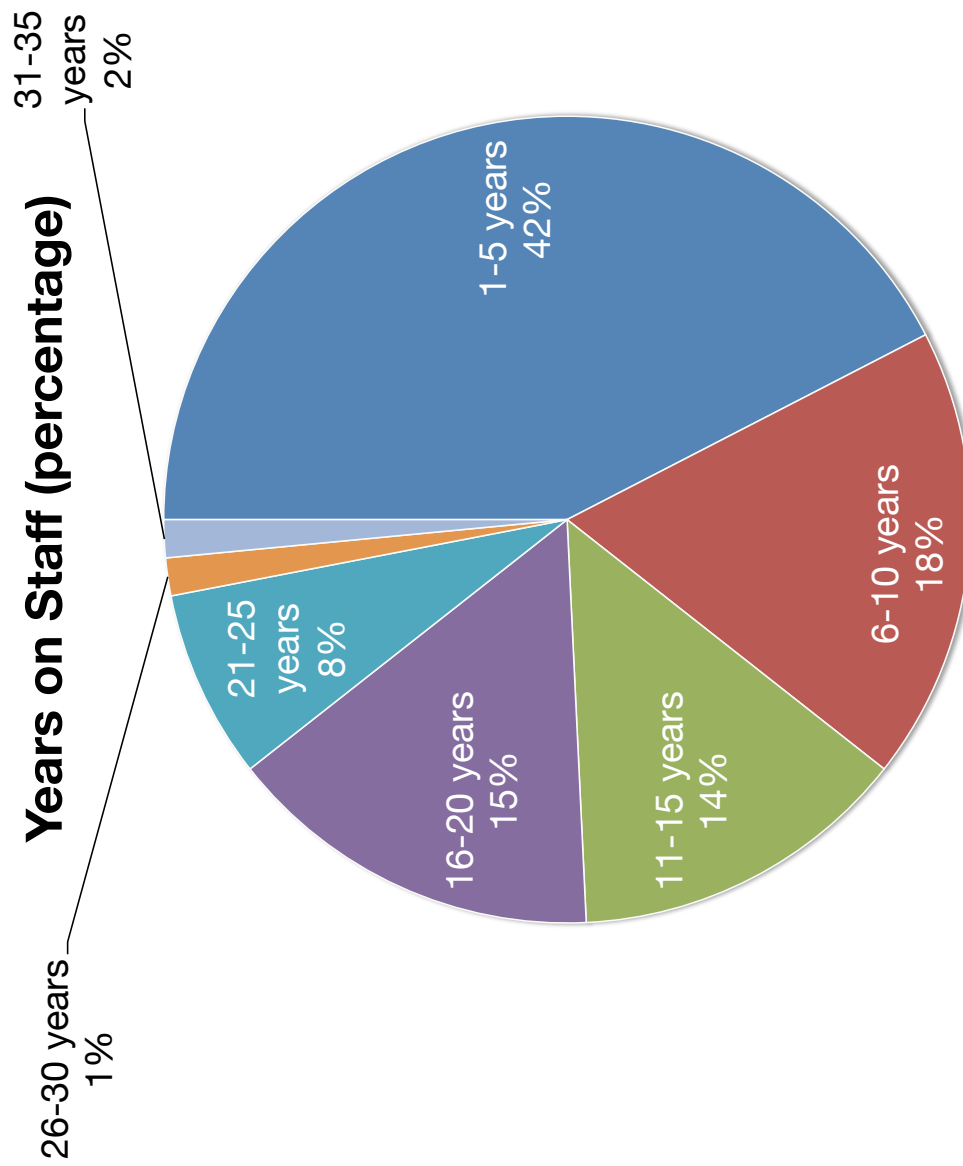
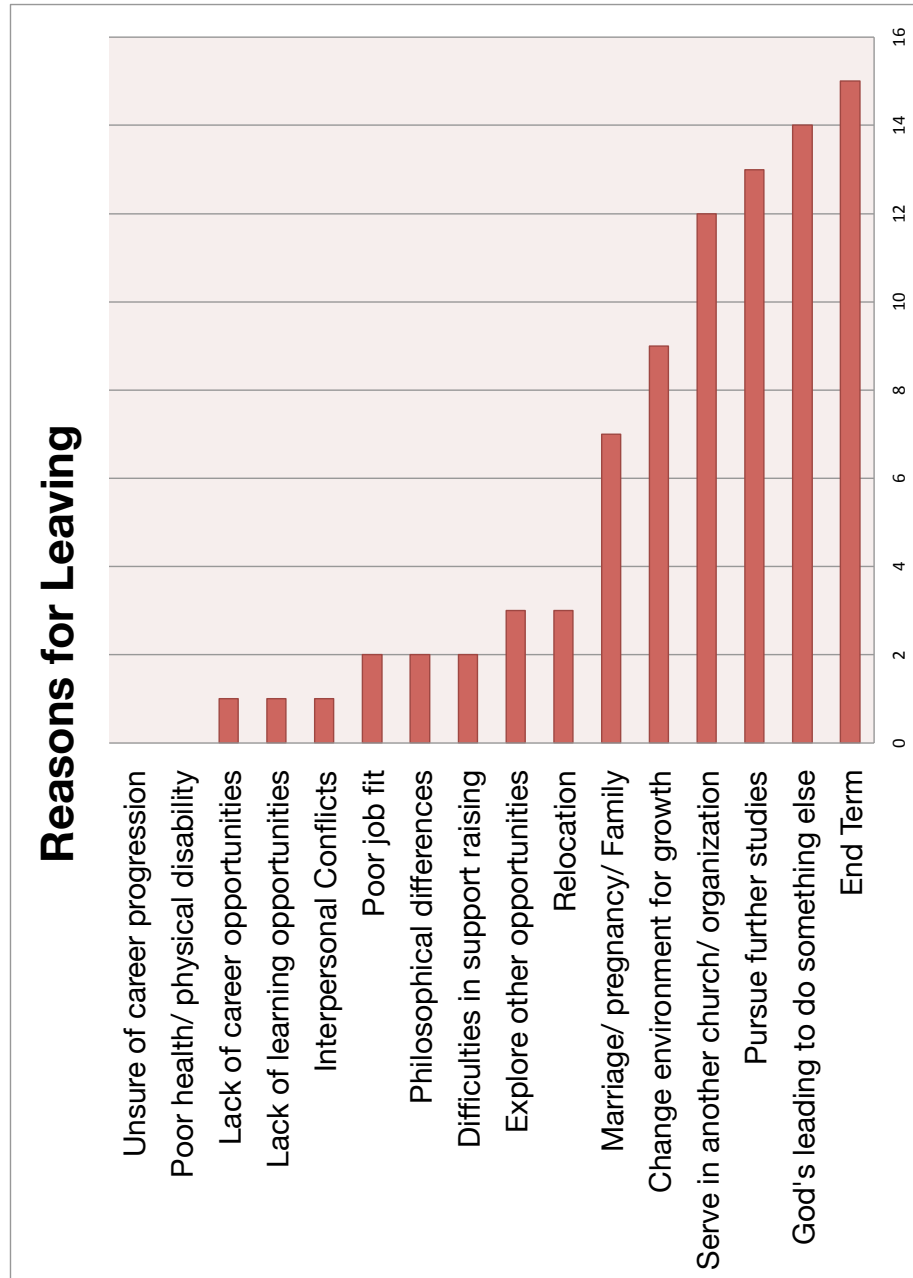


Figure 4. Reasons For Resignation





The remaining 8 staff did not mention about God or what they would be doing next. Second, for the 24 workers who had been on staff for 6 to 15 years, 5 staff stated specifically that they might still serve in vocational Christian work. But 13 staff wrote about God's calling to serve Him in another setting while the remaining 6 did not mention this at all. Third, in the category of 15 workers who had 16 years of service or more under their belts, 5 staff specifically stated that they might still serve in vocational Christian work. But 8 of them wrote about God's calling to serve Him in another setting while the remaining 2 did not mention this at all. Table 6 summarized the type of work a staff member thought of doing after he or she left the organization.

Table 6. What staff thought of doing after leaving organization

Cate- gory	Years on staff	No. of staff	VCW still	God mentioned - future guidance	God not mentioned
I	1 <sup>st</sup> -5 <sup>th</sup> year	27 (41%)	5 (18%)	14 (52%)	8 (30%)
II	6 <sup>th</sup> -15 <sup>th</sup> year	24 (36%)	5 (21%)	13 (54%)	6 (25%)
III	16 <sup>th</sup> year onwards	15 (23%)	5 (33%)	8 (54%)	2 (13%)
	Total	66 (100%)	15 (23%)	35 (53%)	16 (24%)

#### Analysis Of The Collected Data

First, a survey conducted by PriceWaterhouseCoopers found that “pay and benefits were not usually the main reasons why employees leave. Instead, the quality of the relationship with the supervisor and opportunities for career development and for

personal growth were the main reasons employees left their jobs.”<sup>4</sup> True enough, according to figure 3, out of the 66 staff members who resigned, 15 shared that the most common reason for leaving was the completion of a ministry term.<sup>5</sup> These staff members decided to leave either because of job misfits or limited growth opportunities. And out of these 15, 12 of them came from category I (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> year). This indicated that ministers in the early phase of ministry might not see the significance of longevity of vocational Christian service. Many of them could be new to vocational Christian work or they might not even understand fully the nature of the job calling to vocational Christian work.

Second, as the staff matured in seniority in the organization, the more they understood what vocation was about, and their calling from God. This could be seen from the low attrition rate of 13% in category III (16<sup>th</sup> year onwards) staff which was a big contrast to the higher percentage in the other two categories, 25% for category II (6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> year) and 30% for category III (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year), respectively.

Third, from the high 33% of staff members in Category III (16<sup>th</sup> year onwards) who planned to still be in vocational Christian work after leaving Cru Singapore, it could be deduced that many years served in one vocation play a key role in helping a person to stay for the long haul in the same vocation. Though these senior staff had left the organization, they still planned to be in vocational Christian work in another setting. In comparison, 21% of staff workers for Category II (6<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> year) and 18% for Category

---

<sup>4</sup> Robert Tate, “Retaining Skilled, Trained Workers,” *Financial Executive* 23, no. 55, June 2007: 16.

<sup>5</sup> For the HR policy of this organization, a term of service is usually 2 or 3 years in length.

I (1<sup>st</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year) either did not plan to be or were uncertain whether they would still be in Christian work.

Therefore, in seeking to encourage longevity of vocational Christian service and as part of staff development and member care efforts, education on what vocation is all about and the need for vocational Christian work mentioned in chapter two of this thesis-project should be taught to the staff members. Going a step further, contributing factors and practical concerns pertaining to longevity of vocational Christian service mentioned in chapter three should be taught as well.

### **First Syllabus Of EEC Course**

Due to my limited teaching experiences and having newly joined EAST with no prior experience in creating a syllabus, the syllabus for this EEC course was created with many helpful suggestions from the principal and some faculty members of EAST. The first feedback came from an experienced faculty member was not to use the generic term for the minister's gender in the sessions' titles. One example was to entitle the session as "The Ministers And Their Calling" instead of "The Minister And His Calling." With the majority of ministers and especially missionaries who were female, the former title might put the female ministers off even though the course was excellent for learning.

In mid-2015, as a seminary teacher-in-training, it was my privilege to join a group of new faculty members who met regularly for two months of training and coaching under the principal of EAST.<sup>6</sup> During a session on syllabus writing, it was helpful to see the group use the first draft of this syllabus as a case study. With the valuable input from

---

<sup>6</sup> The group comprises of the principal Dr. Keith Shubert, Dr. Raymond Han, Dr. Justin Han, Mr. Jacob Li and me.

the principal and three faculty members, the first working syllabus was eventually developed and used for the EEC course in China.

### **Course Evaluation**

A student evaluation was done at the end of the course. This was an official student feedback required by EAST for the course in September 2015. The completed questionnaires had been compiled and it was attached in Appendix A called “Class Evaluation.” The class of thirty students gave relatively positive evaluation of the course through a formal survey required by EAST. Out of a perfect score of 7 (1, being the least and 7, being the most), the average score for how the course objectives had been accomplished is 6.43 and 6.45 for how assignments, class presentation and lecturer had helped in the learning.

### **Highest Three Scores For Objectives**

The top three syllabus objectives which have the highest evaluation score are as follows: the first area was about discovering the meaning and importance of caring for the ministers’ souls as God’s precious worker and this has a score of 6.9. The second area was about writing the ministers’ own testimony about how God had led them into vocational Christian work and presenting their testimony in class and this had a score of 6.75. The third area was about defining “calling” and whether it was necessary to have the calling of God to enter vocational Christian work and this had a score of 6.69. For the objective with the highest score, what I found out was a typical Chinese minister often labored relentlessly to the extent of neglecting his own self and the people around them.

When there was a time of open appreciation both in written form and verbal encouragement at the end of course, these Chinese ministers felt loved when the teacher urged the students more than once during those two weeks of the course to take responsibility in caring for their own souls so that they could thrive for the long haul in service. As for the next two objectives with the second and third highest scores, it was humbling to read and listen to the testimonies shared regarding their total commitment to God as they carried out their call of duty. Each leader took turns to share their calling every day. Many of these ministers were very clear about the day they received Christ as it was also the same day that they gave their lives to the cause of the gospel. On many occasions during the 2-week course, I witnessed a person broke down in joy (sometimes mixed with regret) when he or she shared their testimony and the teary eyes of fellow classmates as they listened to these sharing. My heart went out to them as these Chinese ministers needed to walk the fine line between sacrifice and self care, and I was humbled by their unreserved dedication to God. They taught me what taking up the cross and following Jesus truly meant! All glory to God for using this course to speak very personally to these ministers' hearts.

#### Lowest Three Scores For Objectives

The lowest three scores on the evaluation for syllabus objectives were as follows: first, cognitively, to know the broad overview of the time line of the Bible and the significance of the seven Covenants of God had a score of 5.97. Second, behaviorally, penning down the ministers' own joy and the struggles they face from themselves, their ministry, their family and the people around them had a score of 6.07. Third, affectively,

is to appreciate and be sensitive to God as to which life skills that He may be teaching the ministers in this season of their life had a score of 6.18. One reason that these objectives received the lowest score was because the students did not know the rationale behind these objectives. For future opportunity to teach this course, I would emphasize these again so that the ministers needed to have a good grasp of the broad overview of the bible like being able to recall key characters and significant events in a chronological manner in order to appreciate the workings of God in the past, present and future. And I could also circle out those key bible characters that would be closely studied in the sessions ahead. But in view of the lowest score for the objective of knowing the Bible's time line and the seven Covenants, it might be a good idea to replace this section with the additional research material that would be discussed in the next section. As for the second and third lowest scores for objectives, the students would be given a template to write down their action points at the end of the course. This would be further discussed in the final chapter.

#### Highest Three Scores For Assignment, Class Presentation and Lecturer

The top three scores for assignment, class presentation and lecturer were related to punctuality. The third high score was the lecturer was available and open for questions without being defensive. These high scores was an encouragement to me as I was initially concerned about my Mandarin low proficiency. I will be teaching this same course in India in September 2017. It will be better as I am going to teach in English with Hindi translation.

### Lowest Three Scores For Assignment, Class Presentation and Lecturer

The lowest three scores for assignment, class presentation and lecturer were as follows. First, how useful was the textbook/textbooks? Second, were the assignments helpful? Were they too many, not spread out enough and unclear? Third, were the assignments and/or quizzes/tests returned promptly? One key challenge I faced in preparing the syllabus was the difficulty in getting the materials translated into Chinese. I solicited the help of volunteers to translate selected pages from seven books. And even if there were ready literature translated into the Chinese language, like the text for this course, some students said that some parts of the translated text were difficult to understand.

### **Additional Research**

In the process of writing this thesis-project, my supervisor highlighted that I should include some discussion on the topic of vocation in chapter two. Having the burden of encouraging longevity of service among vocational Christian workers, I zoomed the research scope into this specific vocation directly and began with the topic of God's calling into fulltime Christian ministry. My supervisor's advice was instead to first begin with some study on vocation and what it was all about. This led to an insightful discovery of more literature that helped to introduce vocational Christian work that was discussed in chapter two. As the word "vocation" comes from the Latin word "vocare" that means "to call" or "calling", vocational Christian work is like all other vocations of man which requires a calling from God towards that particular station in life. Once that calling is ascertained, the purpose of the vocation for man can then be understood. It is to

bless that man and the people around that man (which includes family and the community that we are in).<sup>7</sup> Vocation is never meant for one's own self and pursuit.

### **Revised Syllabus Of Course**

During the period of time when the first syllabus was being created, EAST invited Perry Shaw, author of *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning* to speak at our faculty development time in May 6-8, 2015. He emphasized the importance of having a big picture whether it is running a theological school curriculum on the macro level or creating a teaching course on the micro level.<sup>8</sup> When intentionality is present in theological education such as designing a syllabus, outcome-based education happens. There is a paradigm shift from what education was in the past to what it should be now in the present. Traditionally, education was about teaching. But in recent years of education development, "Education is about learning – not teaching."<sup>9</sup>

Applying the principles learned about outcome-based education, there will be two key changes made to the first syllabus that will be reflected in the revised syllabus (Figure 5). First, I have decided to remove the session two, "Christian Ministers and their Bible" and replace it with "Christian Ministers and their Vocation." Second, the other low score in the evaluation was because the course text, O.S. Guinness' *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* appeared to mirror some views

---

<sup>7</sup> John S. Feinberg, "Luther's Doctrine: Some Problems of Interpretation and Application," *Fides Et Historia* 12 (1979): 59.

<sup>8</sup> Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 21, 143-145.

<sup>9</sup> Shaw, *Transforming Theological Education*, 129.



beneficial to the theme. The reason this text was chosen as the title in the first syllabus was that it was one of those few books with a Chinese translation and with the theme that is near similar to the theme about encouraging longevity of vocational Christian service. But as this course will be taught in English as well, I will explore the possibility of replacing the course text. One possible title is Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman's *Preventing Ministry Failure*. Figure 5 shows the revised syllabus.

## Figure 5. Revised Syllabus

East Asia School Of Theology

East Extension Centre

Course Instructor: Mr. Casey Lok  
(caseylok@east.edu.sg)

### **LF506 Being A Christian Minister Revised Syllabus**

#### **I. Course Description**

This course will benefit all Christian ministers (church pastors/ para-church workers). But it is also suitable for those who have been actively serving God but would like to know and explore what fulltime Christian vocation entails. The course will examine and draw out biblical principles from the topics about full time Christian vocation, ranging from the call of God to longevity of service.

#### **II. Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

##### Cognitive (Know)

1. Explain what vocation is all about and what fulltime Christian vocation entails.
2. Identify biblical principles from the topics about fulltime Christian vocation, ranging from the call of God to longevity of service.
3. Know the broad overview of the time line of the Bible and by knowing the significance of the seven Covenants of God.
4. Define “calling” and whether it is necessary to have the calling of God to enter full time Christian vocation.
5. Discover the meaning and importance of caring for your own soul as God’s precious worker.
6. Acquire four essential life skills towards longevity of service; that is to recognise the differences between God’s glory against man’s significance, faithfulness against effectiveness, friends or foes, and personal aspiration against organisational needs.

##### Affective (Feel)

1. Deepen your conviction of God and the Bible as the bedrocks for ministry.
2. Reflect your own motivation in joining fulltime Christian vocation and to discern whether it is a personal desire or a calling from God.
3. Ponder and discover how you can best care for the condition of your own soul.
4. Appreciate and be sensitive to God as to which life skill(s) that He may be teaching you in this season of your life.

##### Behavioral (Do)

1. Share your conviction of the Bible though a skeletal timeline of the Old Testament.
2. Write and present in class your own testimony in how God has led you into full time Christian vocation.
3. Pen your own joy and the struggles you face from yourself, your ministry, your family and the people around you.
4. List down specific application points how you might overcome the issues surfaced and struggles encountered so as to serve God for the long haul.
5. Encourage other fellow workers in your ministry by helping them understand their calling and develop the life skills in their longevity service.

Figure 5. Revised Syllabus

Assignments				# hrs	% grade
<b>Pre-Class Assignment</b>					
<b>Book Assignment:</b>					
1. Required book reading				23	11(#1)
2. Three reflective papers (3 pages for each paper)				10	12(#2) 12(#3)
<b>Calling Assignment: God's call to full time Christian ministry</b>					
Writing and sharing calling testimony (1-2 pp.)				5	10
<b>Class Assignment</b>					
<b>Class Participation</b>				-	10
Categories	Unit #	Topics	Class Assignment		
I. Beginning Bedrocks: Bible and God	1	Introduction & Course Overview			
	2	Christian Ministers and their Bible			
	3,4,5	Christian Ministers and their God (I, II, III): Biblical Covenants in OT I, II The New Covenant	Unit #6 Preparatory Reading.	1	2
II. Finishing Well: The Call, The Care and The Career	6	Christian Ministers and their Callings I			
	7	Christian Ministers and their Callings II	Unit #8 Preparatory Reading	1	2
	8	Christian Ministers and their Souls	Unit #8a 'Wall' Reading	1	3
			Unit #8b 'Wall' Reflective Paper (1-2 pp.)	7	10
III. Essential Life Skills:	9	Christian Ministers and their Longevity Services			
	10	Christian Ministers and their Pride: God's glory versus man's significance	Unit #11 Preparatory Reading	1	3
	11	Christian Ministers and their Faithfulness: Faithfulness versus Effectiveness	Unit #12 Preparatory Reading	1	3
	12	Christian Ministers and their People: Friends or Foes	Unit #13 Preparatory Reading	1	2
	13	Christian Ministers and their Unfulfilled Dreams: Personal Aspiration versus Organization Needs			
	14	Conclusion and Evaluation			
<b>Post Class Assignment</b>					
<b>Final Assignment (4-5 pp. paper)</b>				7	20
<b>(Total)</b>				<b>58</b>	<b>100</b>

Figure 5. Revised Syllabus

### **Pre-Course Assignment**

#### **I. Book Assignment:**

1. Read O.S. Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*, USA: Word Publishing, 1998.
2. Write three reflective papers on each of the following section of the book that you have read.  
Reflective paper #1: Introduction to Chapter 8  
Reflective paper #2: Chapter 9 to to Chapter 17  
Reflective paper #3: Chapter 18 to Chapter 26

All three written papers should be concise and reflective in nature, **not** repeating what the book/article (**this also applies to other reflective papers for class assignments**) said, but recording

- a. crucial reflections on new insights gained,
  - b. questions raised in your mind (remember you need not agree with what the author says on certain point but you have to explain your reasons), and/or
  - c. issues you would like to explore further at a later time after this course is over.
- All three papers are due the first day of the class and will be assessed as part of the grade for the course. 3% of grade will be deducted for each day of late submission.
  - The total length of each paper should be 3 pages long.
  - Staple your paper and list your name, email address at the top of page 1.
  - Text: Times New Roman or Arial font, font size 12, double-spaced, left margin 1.5", right margin 1"

#### **II. Calling Assignment: God's call to full time Christian ministry**

1. Write a 2-3 pp. testimony of either one of the following. Prepare two copies of your testimony. Your testimony can be one of the following.
  - a. How God has called you into full time Christian ministry (include your conviction based upon specific verses in God's word, circumstances, etc.).

**OR**

  - b. What do you think are some of the uncertainties you have if it is God's will for you to serve Him in full time Christian ministry.
  - c. One copy of the testimony is due the first day of the class and will be assessed as part of the grade for the course. 3% of grade will be deducted for each day of late submission.
2. Keep the other copy of the testimony for yourself. There will be opportunity during the class lessons for each student to be given 3 to 4 minute (maximum) to share his/her testimony. The order for testimony sharing will be according to the list of names registered and given to the instructor. The first person will share at the beginning of class session, unit #2 "Christian Ministers and their Bible."

Figure 5. Revised Syllabus

### Class Assignment

**1. Class Participation**

Each student is to attend all lessons, to actively participate in the interactions as a class and in small groups to enhance uninterrupted and purposeful learning. There will be numerous class interactions on studying bible passages together, especially for units without specific assignment.

**2. Unit #6 Preparatory Reading (pp. 49 in student notes)**

Read Huffman, Douglas S's (editor) *How Then Should We Choose: Three Views on God's Will and Decision Making* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2009). Chap. 1, Henry and Richard Blackaby's *Discerning God's will: The Specific-Will View*, pp. 53-63 (11 pp.).

**3. Unit #8 Preparatory Reading (pp. 55 in student notes)**

Read David Benner's *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel* (Baker, 1998). Chap. 11, Receiving Soul Care, pp. 223-238 (16 pp.).

**4. Unit #8a 'Wall' Reading (pp. 64 in student notes)**

Read Peter Scazzero's *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2006). Chap. 6, Journey through the Wall, pp.117-134 (18 pp.).

**5. Unit #8b 'Wall' Reflective Paper**

Think intentionally a 'Wall' issue that you can identify with what Scazzero highlights in pp. 120-123. In a 1-2 page paper, describe the issue, providing background information and if it fits, commenting on how the wall may affect/lead to ministry failure and/or how you have overcome the wall.

**6. Unit #11 Preparatory Reading (pp. 73 in student notes)**

Read Tim Suttle's *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2014. Chap. 1 "Success" and 2 "Great is the Enemy of Good" pp.19-39 (21 pp.).

**7. Unit #12 Preparatory Reading (pp. 84 in student notes)**

Read Chuck Degroat's *Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life – Including Yourself*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014. "Loving Those who drive you crazy" pp. 45-66 (22 pp.).

**8. Unit #13 Preparatory Reading (pp. 96 in student notes)**

Read Eugene H. Peterson's *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994. "Spiritual vs Program director" pp.174-182 (8 pp.).

**9. Final Assignment**

Recall and write a 4-5 page paper on some lessons in this course that have been of particular help to you.

- Explain how God has used these course materials to guide, encourage, comfort and/or rebuke you in this present season of your life with regards to God's call towards your full time Christian vocation.
- Refer to specific class topic, bible passage, reading of book extract (author's last name or book chapter or page number) which you have learned from.
- List down some practical action points that you will do after the course.
- If you cannot complete this paper on the last day of the course, you may email it to me: caseylok@east.edu.sg. The last day of submission is \_\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_day, before 11.59pm). Late submission will result in a 5% deduction for each day late.

**10. Course evaluation**

At the end of course, there will be a course evaluation. Failure to complete that evaluation will result in a letter grade reduction.

Figure 5. Revised Syllabus

**Assignment Tracking Sheet**

(\*\*\* After filling up this tracking sheet, tear it from syllabus book and submit to the instructor at the end of the course)

Assign- ment #	Pre-Course Assignment		Completed/ Submitted (please tick)	Date Completed /Submitted
1a	<b>Book Assignment:</b> Required book reading			
1b	<b>Book Assignment:</b> Reflective paper #1 (3 pages) Reflective paper #2 (3pages) Reflective paper #3 (3pages)			
2	<b>Calling Assignment: God's call to full time Christian ministry</b> Writing and sharing Calling testimony (2-3 pages)			
3	<b>Class Participation</b>		-	-
4	<b>Unit #6 Preparatory Reading</b>	Read Douglas S. Huffman's (ed.) <i>How Then Should We Choose: Three Views on God's Will and Decision Making</i> . Chap. 1, Henry and Richard Backaby's <i>Discerning God's will: The Specific-Will View</i> , pp. 53-63.		
5	<b>Unit #8 Preparatory Reading</b>	Read David Benner's <i>Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel</i> . Chap. 11 Receiving Soul Care, pp. 223-238.		
6a	<b>Unit #8 'Wall' Reading</b>	Read Peter Scazzero's <i>Emotionally Healthy Spirituality</i> . Chap. 6, Journey through the Wall, pp. 117-134.		
6b	<b>Unit #8 'Wall' Reflective Paper</b>	Think intentionally a 'Wall' issue that you can identify with what Scazzero highlights in pp. 120-123. In a 1-2 page paper, describe the issue.		
7	<b>Unit #11 Preparatory Reading</b>	Read Tim Suttle's <i>Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture</i> . Chap. 1 "Success" and 2 "Great is the Enemy of Good" pp.19-39.		
8	<b>Unit #12 Preparatory Reading</b>	Read Chuck Degroat's <i>Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life – Including Yourself</i> . "Loving Those who drive you crazy" pp. 45-66.		
9	<b>Unit #13 Preparatory Reading</b>	Read Eugene H. Peterson's <i>Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness</i> . "Spiritual vs. Program director" pp.174-182.		
10	<b>Final Assignment</b>	Recall and write a 4-5 pp. paper on some lessons in this course that have been of particular help to you.		
11	<b>Course Evaluation</b>			

## **Conclusion**

As the first syllabus which was used to teach the EEC in September 2015 was put together under a tight deadline, I am grateful for this thesis-project opportunity to take a closer look at the syllabus and my teaching notes so I can improve on it. This revised and balanced syllabus will give rise to a better course. During the writing of this thesis-project, another two extension centers have been set up in Myanmar and India. And I will be teaching this course using the revised syllabus at India's EEC in September 2017. Therefore, the scope of this thesis-project has now grown to beyond the first class in September 2015. Another conversation with the LDHR department of Cru Singapore discusses about the possibility of teaching this course to all the campus ministry staff serving in the organization. In the immediate future, this course may also be conducted in the local campus of EAST in Singapore. It is my desire and prayer that God will use the syllabus to educate and encourage His workers to build a strong conviction to serve God for the long haul in their ministry fields.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### OUTCOMES AND CONCLUSION

#### **Introduction**

“Casey, I want to let you know that I have decided to leave the staff” – my heart sank when I received the phone call from my associate campus director one morning in 1993. I was only in my second year of directing this campus ministry then. My concern was not only just about losing a capable associate leader, but I was at a loss at how to counsel someone leaving vocational Christian work as this was my first such encounter. For some reasons, she had planned to return and take up a job in the marketplace. Perhaps at the back of my mind, I assumed that every minister who came into the Lord’s work had heeded a calling from God to step into the harvest fields. And by the grace of God, I thought that this calling should be irrevocable, something similar to the call of discipleship.

I felt strongly that a minister ought not to take their calling into vocational Christian work lightly. After being on staff for twenty-five years, the conviction of a calling from God for vocational Christian work grew stronger from my own ministry challenges. The recent midlife crisis that I had was one example that God’s calling in my life was evident. I was not tempted to leave vocational Christian work in the midst of my personal struggles. God orchestrated the timely studies at Gordon-Conwell that gave me the opportunity to evaluate and study during this season of my life. I set my heart at the outset of the program to write about the specific call of God into vocational Christian work and how to encourage longevity of this vocational service. But with the helpful



direction given by my supervisor, I was led to discover for myself this whole concept about what vocation was all about. It was a good opportunity to teach the ministers at the extension centers of East Asia School of Theology using the research material in this thesis-project.

The scope of this thesis-project is aimed at the students studying at the East Asia School of Theology's Extension Center (EEC) in China. As a part of encouraging longevity of vocational Christian service is the importance of helping the students apply what they have learned from the course. In the midst of writing this thesis-project, I have been asked to coordinate the mentoring program for the twenty-six students in China's EEC. I taught two courses to these students in September 2015 and November 2016. My new responsibility is to recruit a Mandarin-speaking mentor for every student. I have to also create a 3-year curriculum for the mentoring to take place beginning from early 2017. This mentoring program will be a platform to help these ministers serve for the long haul.

In this chapter, I will first begin by reviewing the concept of vocation. After the call to discipleship, every believer is to know about the call to vocation, regardless of whether it is vocational Christian work or in the marketplace. Second, the chapter will also include the practical efforts in the form of a mentoring curriculum to encourage the longevity of this vocational service among Christian ministers studying at EAST.

### **Calling Of Vocational Christian Work**

After looking at how the theology of vocation was abused from the post Middle Age onwards, Guinness lamented that the latter was more damaging than the former.

Guinness said, “Better, it would seem, the dualism of making calling purely spiritual than the dualism of making calling purely secular.”<sup>1</sup> The damage of post-vocational intonation made in the sixteenth century was indeed so extensive that even five centuries later, the challenge remained: how can we bring present day believers back to the right understanding of the cultural mandate as laid out in Gen 1:22? Writers in the present decade such as Veith, Palmer, Smith, Stevens, Guinness and Peterson attempted to recover God’s intended purpose of work from the concept of vocation.<sup>2</sup> Colson, as well, wrote about the Protestant work ethic that Luther advocated:

That ethic taught us that work is a gift from God. Something to be valued for its own sake. Something that reflects the nature of God Himself... People need a bigger reason to work; they need a sense of calling and purpose in their work lives... if children don't learn to work hard in school, they'll never work hard on their jobs... But the real test of the work ethic is in whether we follow it in our own lives. If you run a business, are you paying your employees a fair wage?... Whether you are an architect or an airline hostess, whether you are a school teacher or a Wall Street trader, remember one thing. Your work is your calling: Therefore work as one working for God, not for man.<sup>3</sup>

Vocation is not merely a job to earn our keep but it is a calling from God to bless the people around the ministers. Luther says that when a person does his or her vocation well, he or she is the mask of God. Through the vocation, the people are able to see God when the person lives up his or her calling from God.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> O. S. Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Word, 1998), 39.

<sup>2</sup> The books (from the latest publishing year) which I used are Gene Edward Jr. Veith’s *God at Work (Redesign): Your Vocational Christian work in All of Life*, Redesign ed. (2011); Parker J. Palmer’s *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (2000); Gordon T. Smith’s *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential*, (1999); R. Paul Stevens’ *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (1999); O. S. Guinness’ *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (1998); Eugene Peterson’s *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness* (1994).

<sup>3</sup> Chuck Colson, “Your Work, Your Calling,” Break Point, accessed Sep 20, 2016, <https://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/10337>.

Veith has sought to relate Luther's concept of vocation into the present days with the term "multiple callings." Veith says:

And we too are masks of God in all of our multiple callings. We have callings in the church (pastors, elders, choir members, parishioners); in the state (rulers, subjects, voters); in the workplace (employer, employee, factory worker, milkmaid, businessman); and in the family (husband and wife; father and mother; child; grandparent).<sup>5</sup>

However, though the rationale behind the usage is valid, an alternative should be considered as I feel that the word "calling" is an over-used word. It baffles the mind to understand how the supreme God calls His subjects to accomplish a task. This constitutes the element of awe and reverence not only to God, but also to the call of God. Thus, the callings of God should just be restricted to three key areas as stated in chapter two, namely the call to discipleship, the call to vocation and the specific call to vocational Christian work. Instead of using "One Vocation, Multiple Callings", a better term would be "One Vocation, Multiple Roles."<sup>6</sup> Under this new term, the Latin meaning of vocation can still be kept to mean a call from God. Since the original meaning of vocation in Latin applies to the clerical work function of the priest and since every human has a job profession in the workplace, the name of a profession will determine the vocation. In that given vocation, it can be concluded each believer is required to live out that calling of God through the four roles in the workplace, the family, the church and the society.

---

<sup>4</sup> Gene Edward Veith, "Vocation: The Theology of the Christian Life," *Journal of Markets & Morality* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 122.

<sup>5</sup> Gene Edward Veith, "Authority in Vocation," Ligonier Ministries, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/authority-vocation>.

<sup>6</sup> David K. Naugle, "Redeeming Vocation," Break Point, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/15248-redeeming-vocation>.

In view of the urgency to hasten the return of Christ's second coming by accelerating the efforts to raise more laborers for the harvest field, it is thus necessary to examine afresh and emphasize this vocation again. In so doing, it is not to elevate this specific vocation to a more spiritual level than the other vocations. It is not to fall into the same fallacy of the Church during Luther's time to view vocational Christian work as "sacred" and the other vocations as "secular." Chapter two of this thesis-project has deliberated on this matter in details. When due emphasis is placed on vocational Christian work, potential ministers will be heartened to pursue this vocation when they feel that God has called them into ministry. As the call to vocational Christian work can lead to a path requiring self-sacrifice, the tendency is not to heed God's call. Many will instead misinterpret and use the notion that all vocations are sacred to appease their conscience in choosing another vocation in the marketplace. Though the above proposition can be challenged in that God will bring His own will to pass in His sovereign providence, this opposing, seemingly right view has to be kept in balance that it does not negate the responsibility of His people to take initiatives and respond when God calls. The thrust of this thesis-project is therefore to harness all efforts to champion God's call to vocational Christian work and encourage Christian ministers who have heeded the call to serve God for the long haul in this vocation.

### **Encouraging Longevity Of Vocational Christian Service**

While chapter two emphasizes the unique call to vocational Christian work, chapter three of this thesis-project highlights some key principles to help Christian ministers stay in the vocation for the long haul. Knowing these principles can be an

intellectual goal in itself. However, it is worth the efforts to encourage ministers to have confidants whom they can share with and can help them apply these principles into their lives. When I went to teach the second course at the China's EEC in November 2016, I left the place with a deeper burden. Leaders like these 26 ministers are very lonely as they shepherd God's flocks. Palmer explains that a soul needs a "circle of trust" before the soul, especially if it is hurting feels safe to pour out their "fragmented and frenzied lives."<sup>7</sup> One middle-aged pastor there shares that he is very tired having to still smile in church and pretend that everything is alright on the outside even though he can be experiencing struggles on the inside. Another lady pastor confesses that she has resorted to a one-night stand before when both she and her husband were busy in church and the marketplace respectively. My heart went out to these students on that one cold winter night while I was there. I knelt and brought these ministers before the throne of grace and prayed for God to strengthen each one of them (Heb 4:16). The condition of these ministers' souls causes me to be more motivated to coordinate the mentoring program at this extension center, an additional role given to me in early 2016. After my two courses of teaching there for the last two years, I saw this as another opportunity to further encourage these Chinese ministers in the longevity of their vocational service through mentoring. God willing, the mentoring program is to begin next year once all the mentors are recruited from inside or outside China.

In the first year of the mentoring program, the students are to identify the area that they would want to grow as part of their personal development.<sup>8</sup> They are to share their

---

<sup>7</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 71-87.

personal development plan (Appendix B) with their mentors who are to communicate with them monthly through social media channels. These regular interactions allow the mentors to remind them of these growth areas. In the second year, they are to create their life map through the use of a life map worksheet (Appendix C) and life map chart as shown in Appendix D, which also contains information on how to draw the map in the chart. The purpose of a life map<sup>9</sup> is to identify any situation or stage in life that may have affected them in a positive (or negative) way towards long service in their vocation. In the third year and building on their life map, the students are to understand what it means to “put off their old man and to put on their new man.” (Eph 4:22-24) But before they can lay aside their old man and put on their new man, they should know the characteristics of the old man they are to put off and the characteristics of the new man they are to put on. (2 Cor 5:17) For this reason, the students are to write and describe to their mentors about their “old man” and “new man.” Though Eph 4:22-24 is an unending life-long process for a believer in this world, the students’ constant efforts to move from the “old man” to the “new man” is necessary in order to serve effectively for the long haul.

## **Conclusion**

It was by no coincidence that my church (Bethesda Serangoon Church) announced on July 2013 that the church leader (whom I mentioned in chapter one) had chosen to retire after being in this vocational Christian work from 1970 to 2013. The reason given was that a new management team had taken over the bookstore that he was

---

<sup>8</sup> Carolyn Rave, “Writing a Personal Development Plan,” Cru Press Green, accessed September 20, 2016, <https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy//2012/03/Personal-Development-Plan.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Bill Gaultiere, “Mapping Your Spiritual Journey,” Soul Shepherding, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.soulshepherding.org/2015/04/mapping-your-spiritual-journey>.

working. In terms of length, 43 years was not short. In fact, it was a long service! I recalled his inspiring yet provoking question during my interview when I came into ministry in 1991 – “Do you want to do this for life?” For whatever reason of leaving the bookstore, I hope that he had finished well. It is a reminder for me that I can complete the long haul well when the day comes. The one and only perfect example of longevity vocational Christian service is none other than our Master. Jesus Christ is committed to the mission whom His Father had given him; and Jesus finished it well, even until death at the cross.

Vocational Christian workers embark in the journey of their vocations from point A and they aspire to finish well at the end, at point B. Chapter two of this thesis-project mentions the importance of understanding vocation as a calling from God and in particular, having a specific calling into vocational Christian work which will become a significant milestone at point A. As in other vocations, the journey of vocational Christian work from point A to B will inevitably be filled with excitement as well as disappointments. This is elaborated in chapter three as it explains the three contributing factors (namely God, bible and souls) towards longevity of vocational Christian service and the three practical concerns (namely attitude, relationship and desire) that either hinder or encourage long service of the ministers. From the human perspective, the ministers set their hearts to begin at point A and end at point B with the shortest straight line. However, for every sincere minister who wishes to travel on this journey marked out by God, the two points are not joined by one straight line, instead the starting and the

ending point are filled with many zigs zags in between.<sup>10</sup> This is illustrated very clearly in the 40 years of wilderness route that connected Goshen to the time when the Israelites crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land from Jericho. There was a sharp U-shape turn at Kadesh Barnea where instead of a 40-day direct entrance into Canaan, God redirected them into the wilderness for 40 years because of their disobedience, so that only the new generation could witness the fulfillment of His promise.

My intention of doing this research is not to place vocational Christian ministers on an unduly high pedestal. In so doing, I will make the same mistake as the clergies in the medieval church about the distorted dualism concerning what is sacred and what is secular. But it is also not to negate the need of God's calling into vocational Christian work and compromise the screening criteria to have more Christian ministers. But for the sake of God's glory and His kingdom, churches and Christian organizations should take time to deliberate this important matter of encouraging longevity of service among vocational Christian workers.

In maneuvering through the last few years of midlife, I wrestled with vocational issues too after being a Christian minister for twenty-five years. I sought God's will concerning whether to take a step of faith to move on from a para-church setting and to a pastorate ministry or whether to continue to be faithful to serve in the present organization. Regardless of whatever the outcome of decision may be but definitely within the sovereign providence of my God, my heart is nonetheless clear about still staying on course as a vocational Christian worker. I am soberly convinced of His call for me to join vocational Christian work in 1988. That calling eventually metamorphosed

---

<sup>10</sup> Donald Robert Sunukjian, *Invitation to Theological Studies Series, Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007), 2:315-30.



into a reality when I left a previous engineering vocation to join Cru Singapore in 1991. Now twenty-five years later, I am thankful that I am still in ministry and God has given me the opportunity to teach practical theology subjects as a seminary teacher at East Asia School of Theology. Though the last two years was a transitional period, I was glad that I did not resign from vocation Christian work. The doctoral studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary was timely in helping me process what I was going through while I was still in the thick of my midlife crisis. In completing this thesis-project and my studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, I hope that it will mark the end of my midlife crisis as well. I look forward in continual effective service to God as a vocational Christian worker in this next season of my life.

# APPENDIX A

## COURSE EVALUATION

### Class Evaluation

East Asia School of Theology (EAST)  
EAST Extension Center (EEC)

#### Class Information

LF506  
Being a Christian Minister  
11-19 Sep  
Teacher(s): Casey Lok  
Teaching Asst: Koh Aitee  
Class Asst: Boon Suan Chew

Please circle one

Credit / Audit

DIRECTIONS: The purpose of this section of the evaluation is to evaluate the content, not the lecturer. Please keep this in mind as you honestly complete the following material. This will help immensely as EAST moves to a new curriculum.

Class Content: Educational objectives that were to be realized: Circle the number that best reflects your ability to accomplish the following items. A 1 indicates that you are totally unable to perform this task, a 4 indicates you are average within the class, and a 7 indicates complete competence.

	Least	Ave	Most	Av. score of class
<b>Syllabus objectives:</b>				
<b>Cognitive (Know)</b>				
1. Describe what full time Christian vocation entails.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.41</b>
2. Identify biblical principles from the topics about full time Christian vocation, ranging from the call of God to longevity service.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.41</b>
3. Know the broad overview of the time line of the Bible and by knowing the significance of the seven Covenants of God.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>5.97</b>
4. Define “calling” and whether it is necessary to have the calling of God to enter full time Christian vocation.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.69</b>
5. Discover the meaning and importance of caring for your own soul as God’s precious worker.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.90</b>
6. Acquire four essential life skills towards longevity service; that is to recognise the differences between God’s glory against man’s significance, faithfulness against effectiveness, friends or foes and personal aspiration against organisational needs	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.34</b>
<b>Affective (Feel)</b>				
1. Deepen your conviction of God and the Bible as the bedrocks for ministry.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.52</b>
2. Reflect your own motivation in joining full time Christian vocation and to discern whether it is a personal desire or a calling from God.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.41</b>
3. Ponder and discover how you can best care for the condition of your own soul.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.48</b>
4. Appreciate and be sensitive to God as to which life skill(s) that He may be teaching you in this season of your life.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.18</b>
<b>Behavioral (Do)</b>				
1. Share your conviction of the Bible especially the timeline of the Old Testament.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.50</b>
2. Write and present in class your own testimony in how God has led you into full time Christian vocation.	1	2	3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.75</b>

## APPENDIX A

### COURSE EVALUATION

3. Pen down your own joy and the struggles you face from yourself, your ministry, your family and the people around you.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<b>6.04</b>
4. List down specific application points how you might overcome the issues surfaced and struggles encountered so as to serve God for the long haul.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<b>6.25</b>
5. Encourage other fellow workers in your ministry by helping them understand their calling and develop the life skills in their longevity service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<b>6.33</b>
								Total <b>96.18</b>
								Average <b>6.41</b>

Class Assignments: Did the assignments help me learn the material?  
 Yes, helpful. The assignment helps me to learn the class materials.  
 Reading assignment is very good and suitable for the lesson.

Which assignments were most helpful?

- Calling Testimony
- Reading assignments (x14) :
  - o Helps me to reflect and understand that I can experience freedom and joy when I rely on him to overcome my “walls”
  - o Reflection paper helps me to apply what I read and although writing is difficult but I learn more after doing my written assignments.
- Application assignments
  - Soul Care (x13)
  - God’s calling for full time ministers (x6)
  - The end of course assignment helps me to consolidate what I learn and apply them.
  - Small group sharing
  - Boundary
  - 7 Covenants

Which assignments could have been improved? How?

Need to give more instruction on how to write. Do not fully understand what is meant by “reflection”.  
 Remove pre-class reading(x3) too much reading assignment(x3). No time to digest because of the load, can give us some time to absorb what we learn. Maybe one-to-one time with the teacher. Maybe go through the readings with us more in class.

Which assignments could have been eliminated?

Nothing needs to be removed (x). Calling testimony and personal testimony repeated. Remove pre-class reading, we have too much ministry, no time to read (x9).  
 Remove the reflection assignments (x2).

Were the assignments well-spaced throughout the quarter?  
 Ok (x21). A bit too packed (x6)

Were there too many, too few assignments?  
 Just nice (x20). Cut down on the written assignment. A bit too much (x6)

Was the workload commensurate with other classes in the same discipline as this class?  
 Similar load (x9) different content (x3) Slightly lesser than other class. A bit more than others

How useful was the textbook or textbooks? Please comment:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<b>5.90</b>
-----------------------------------------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	-------------

Class Presentation and Lecturer: Circle the number that best reflects your perspective.

- |                                                                                                                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| 1. My best was expected during the class<br>I was very discouraged (1) – Average (4) – I was very encouraged (7)                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | <b>6.38</b> |
| 2. Application of the material to my life was realized<br>Little or no application (1) – Average (4) – High personal application (7)  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | <b>6.39</b> |
| 3. The class built a need in me to learn the material<br>Lessons were dull and boring (1) – Average (4) – Lessons were motivating (7) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | <b>6.50</b> |

## APPENDIX A

### COURSE EVALUATION

4. The class equipped me for further service Irrelevant for my ministry (1) – Average (4) – Highly helpful for my ministry (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.61</b>
5. I felt love and concern for me and the rest of the class Cold towards students (1) – Average (4) – Warm towards students (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.54</b>
6. The class revived my heart for God No life change (1) – Average (4) – Challenged my heart (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.36</b>
7. Lecturer was available & open for questions without being defensive. Not ever available (1) – Average (4) – Always available (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.82</b>
8. Lecturer was knowledgeable, experienced & knows his/her stuff well. Basic knowledge (1) – Average (4) – Very knowledgeable (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. The class lessons were well prepared Usually prepared (1) – Average (4) – Always prepared (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.61</b>
10. Different types of teaching methods (lecture, discussion, small group role play, case study, etc). Lecture only (1) – Several (4) – Many different teaching methods used (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.43</b>
11. Assignments and/or quizzes/tests were returned promptly. Significant delay before returning (1) – Average (4) – Returned promptly (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.07</b>
12. Classes began and ended on time Began class late (1) – Average (4) – Began class on time (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.86</b>
Ended class late (1) – Average (4) – Ended class on time (7)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.85</b>
13. Assignments helpful? Too many? Not spread out enough? Unclear? Took too much time? Please comment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	<b>6.04</b>
		Total <b>0.00</b>
		Average <b>6.45</b>
14. What were the lecturer's strengths? Sincere (x7), ask good questions that stimulate thinking (x2), in-depth explanation, strong intriguing personal testimony, joyful (x2), passionate, humble (x2), approachable (x3), knowledgeable (x5), great TA (x2), exemplify caring for the soul, able to answer questions in details, love China, love us (x3), empathize with us during class sharing (x2), patient (x3), life-on-life impartation (x7), influence with life, servant, touches life with his sharing, good demonstration and exhortation (x2), focus (x5), expressive through his body language (filled with life)(x6), good character, faithful, well-prepared		
15. What additional skills would be helpful for lecturer in order to be more effective? Better command of language (x24)		

## APPENDIX B

### PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FIRST YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM)

**Personal Development Plan for year ending** \_\_\_\_\_ **/ 20\_\_ (month / year)**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mentor's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Areas of Development</b> Use these questions to help set your goals and actions.	<b>Goals for Personal Development</b>	<b>Specific Action Points</b>	<b>Deadlines/ Mentor's Remarks after Review</b>
<b>Relationship with God</b> What are the strengths of your walk with God? What areas need growth? What are some obstacles to overcome?	1.   2.	1.   2.	1.   2.
<b>Personal Life (Eg. physical, mental, emotional, etc.)</b> What are the strengths of your personal life? What areas need growth? What are some obstacles to overcome?	1.   2.	1.   2.	1.   2.
<b>Relationship with Others</b> What are the strengths of your relationship with others? What areas need growth? What are some obstacles to overcome?	1.   2.	1.   2.	1.   2.
<b>Ministry skills (eg. leadership, service, fundraising, etc.)</b> What are the strengths of your ministry skills? What areas need growth? What are some obstacles to overcome? What are your spiritual gifts/ talents?	1.   2.	1.   2.	1.   2.
		1	

EAST Extension Centre Mentoring Program, (Casey Lok, version July 2016)

# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (FIRST YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM)

## Please take note:

1. Set your goals in a SMART way.
2. If you already know your old man/new man, your goals should help you move from your old man to new man. If you do not know yet, your goals should be based upon your current situation.
3. Choose two goals each time to develop for a period of time (between 3 to 6 months). Review with your mentor regularly (set deadlines) whether to choose new goals or not.

## What is SMART goals? (<https://east.madison.k12.wi.us>)

**I. Specific** - A specific goal has a much greater chance of being accomplished than a general goal. To set a specific goal you must answer the six "W" questions:

- \*Who: Who is involved?
- \*What: What do I want to accomplish?
- \*Where: Identify a location.
- \*When: Establish a time frame.
- \*Which: Identify requirements and constraints.
- \*Why: Specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.

**II. Measurable** - Establish concrete criteria for measuring progress toward the attainment of each goal you set. When you measure your progress, you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the exhilaration of achievement that spurs you on to continued effort required to reach your goal.

To determine if your goal is measurable, ask questions such as.....How much? How many? How will I know when it is accomplished?

**III. Attainable** - When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities, and skills to reach them. You begin seeing previously overlooked opportunities to bring yourself closer to the achievement of your goals. You can attain most any goal you set when you plan your steps wisely and establish a time frame that allows you to carry out those steps. Goals that may have seemed far away and out of reach eventually move closer and become attainable, not because your goals shrink, but because you grow and expand to match them. When you list your goals you build your self-image. You see yourself as worthy of these goals, and develop the traits and personality that allow you to possess them.

**IV. Realistic** - To be realistic, a goal must represent an objective toward which you are willing to work. A goal can be both high and realistic; you are the only one who can decide just how high your goal should be. But be sure that every goal represents substantial progress. A high goal is frequently easier to reach than a low one because a low goal exerts low motivational force. Some of the hardest jobs you ever accomplished actually seem easy simply because they were a labor of love. Your goal is probably realistic if you truly believe that it can be accomplished. Additional ways to know if your goal is realistic is to determine if you have accomplished anything similar in the past or ask yourself what conditions would have to exist to accomplish this goal.

**V. Timely** - A goal should be grounded within a time frame. With no time frame tied to it there's no sense of urgency. If you want to lose 10 kg, when do you want to lose it by? "Someday" won't work. But if you anchor it within a timeframe, "by May 1st", then you've set your unconscious mind into motion to begin working on the goal.

**T can also stand for Tangible** - A goal is tangible when you can experience it with one of the senses, that is, taste, touch, smell, sight or hearing. When your goal is tangible you have a better chance of making it specific and measurable and thus attainable.

## Examples of SMART goals:

- 1a. Bad example: "I want to lose weight".
- 1b. Good example: "I want to lose 10kg by April 15th 2017. I will perform a half hour of cardio and half hour of strength training per day, 5 times a week and I will only eat starchy carbohydrates 3 times a week."
- 2a. Bad example: "I want to write a book".
- 2b. Good example: "I want to write a work book on "How to add 10 years to your life" that is at least 150 pages in length and get it completed by June 30th 2017. I will write at least 4 pages every weekday until I complete the book."
- 3a. Bad example: "I want to read the whole bible."
- 3b. Good example: "I want to read 3 chapters from either OT or NT every morning from tomorrow onwards so that I can complete all the 66 books in a year by 30 Dec 2017."

## APPENDIX C

### LIFE MAP WORKSHEET (SECOND YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM)

#### **LIFE MAP OVERVIEW**

Answer the following questions in the worksheet. Pls use additional space if necessary.

##### **Heritage**

*What geographical, ethnic, or family factors influenced you? How? Why?*

##### **Heroes**

*What relationships played a major factor in influencing your character or shaping your direction (positively or negatively)? How? Why?*

##### **High Points**

*What experiences have you enjoyed the most and what did you do well? Why? What experiences illustrate your special abilities?*

##### **Hard times**

*What experiences were especially difficult or painful? Why? How did they make you feel?*

##### **Life/Ministry Values**

*What life and ministry values has God developed through the stages of your life? How have they changed and grown over time? Which values are core?*

**1. Analysis:**

Now that you have completed the worksheet, it's time to analyze which of these you want to put in your Life Map. While it would be nice to share everything, it would be impossible to do so within the time restrictions. Also, there are certain aspects of your life journey which have played more prominent roles than others. This is the time when you begin to focus in on a few of the most significant influences/experiences in your life that were formative. By "formative" we mean those experiences which have made a lasting impact on who you are today. Spend some time praying through what you have listed, circle or highlight those experiences that were formative. What you choose is totally up to you.

**2. Organization & synthesis:**

You are now ready to organize this information into a logical flow of thought. How do these people, places and events fit together? Are there titles you can use to describe the stages of your life? Are there common threads that run throughout your life? How can you depict them graphically?

**3. Presentation:**

You will present and share your life maps to your mentors. Please use the graph on the Life Map sheet to show how positive or negative the experience was to you (e.g., getting married might be a +10; losing a parent a -10). Do not worry about trying to be really creative. It is your story and it will be great no matter how artistic you are! An example of a Life Map is also attached.

## APPENDIX C

### LIFE MAP WORKSHEET (SECOND YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM)

<u>LIFE MAP WORKSHEET</u>				
Name: _____				
Year(s)/Age: Location/Occupation	0-20	21-40	41-60	61 and onwards
<b>Heritage</b> What geographical, ethnic, or family factors influenced you? How? Why?				
<b>Heroes</b> What relationships played a major factor in influencing your character or shaping your direction (positively or negatively)? How? Why?				

© 1997 Center for CLeadership

2



## APPENDIX C

### LIFE MAP WORKSHEET (SECOND YEAR MENTORING PROGRAM)

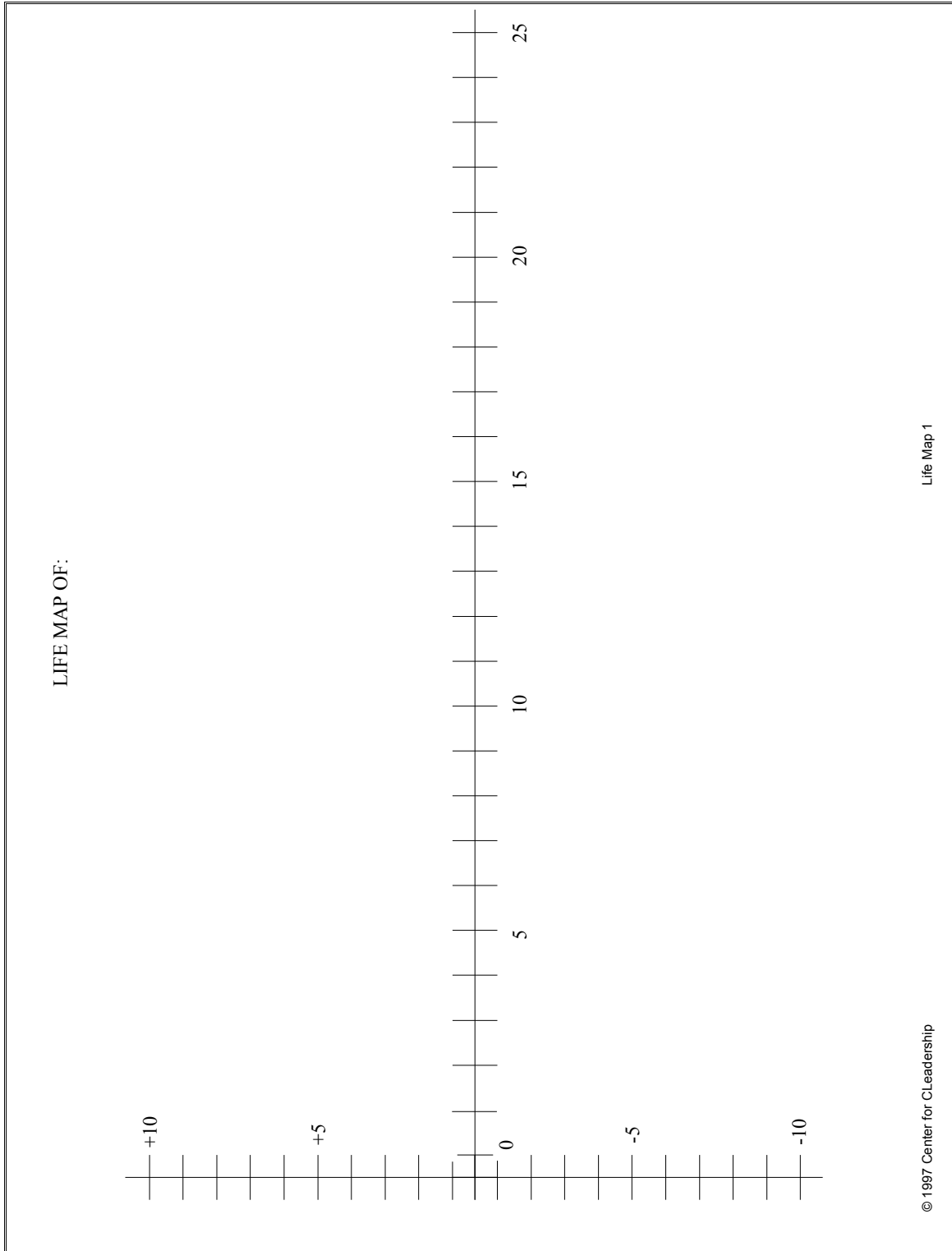
<b>High Points</b> What experiences have you enjoyed the most and what did you do well? Why? What experiences illustrate your special abilities?					61 and onwards
<b>Hard Times</b> What experiences were especially difficult or painful? Why? How did they make you feel?					41-60
<b>Life/Ministry Values</b> What life and ministry values has God developed through the stages of your life? How have they changed and grown over time? Which values are core?					21-40
<b>Year(s)/Age:</b>					0-20

© 1997 Center for CLeadership

3

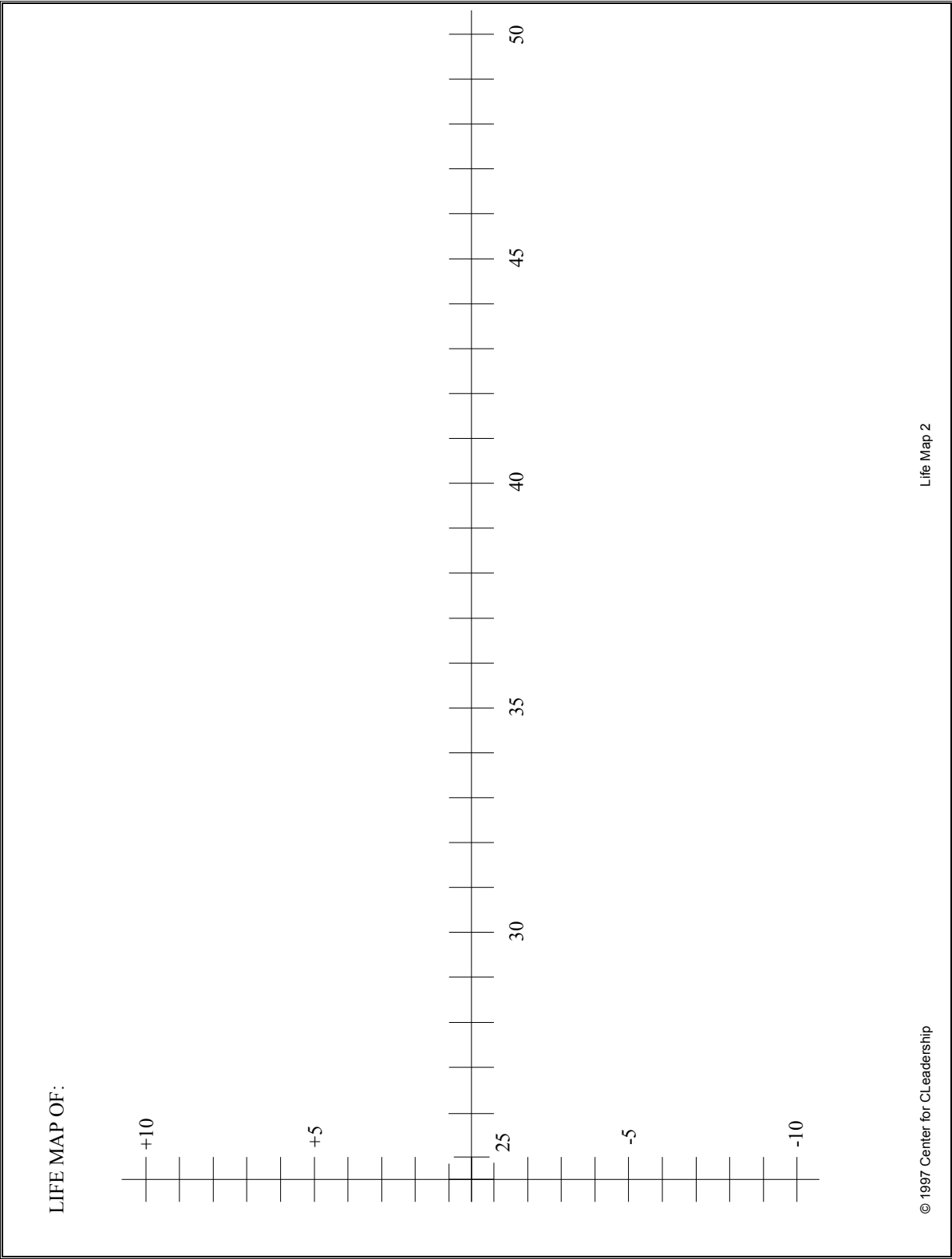
## APPENDIX D

### LIFE MAP



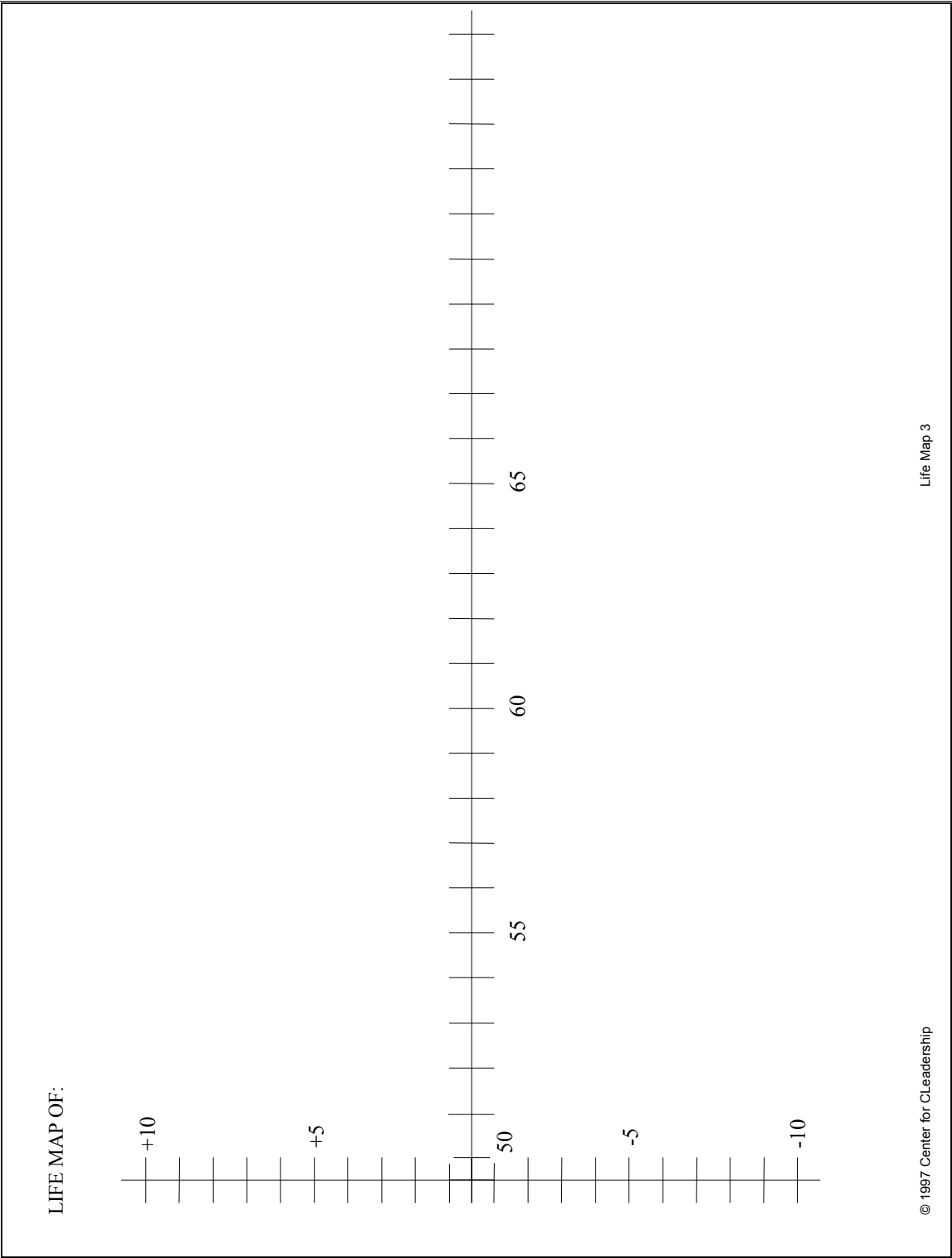
APPENDIX D

LIFE MAP



APPENDIX D

LIFE MAP



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, Neil T. *Victory Over the Darkness: Realize the Power of Your Identity in Christ*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2013.
- Ang, Seng Chai. *Performance and Empowerment: Lessons in Leading and Motivating Employees*. Shah Alam: Penerbit Fajar Bakti, 1999.
- Arnold, Bill T. *Encountering Biblical Studies: Encountering the Book of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998.
- Barker, Kenneth L. *The NIV Study Bible, New International Version*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985.
- Bartlett, John. *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations: A Collection of Passages, Phrases, and Proverbs Traced to Their Sources in Ancient and Modern Literature*. 18th ed. New York: Little Brown, 2012.
- Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
- Beasley-Murray, George Raymond. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 36, *John*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1999.
- Benner, David G. *Care of Souls: Revisioning Christian Nurture and Counsel*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988.
- . *Strategic Pastoral Counseling: A Short-Term Structured Model*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003.
- Bennis, Warren G. *On Becoming a Leader*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus, 1994.
- Blackaby, Henry T., Henry R. Brandt, and Kerry L. Skinner. *The Power of the Call*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost Of Discipleship*. NY: Touchstone Rockefeller, 1995.
- Buechner, Frederick. *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. NY: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Burns, Bob, Tasha D. Chapman and Donald C. Guthrie. *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving And Thriving*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013.
- Carter, Richard. "What Do Simple Folk Do: A Lutheran Doctrine of Vocation as Mission Work." *Missio Apostolica* 14, no. 1 (May 2006): 52.
- Catherwood, H F R. *On the Job: The Christian 9 to 5*. Edited by George N. Monsma. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983.

- Chambers, Oswald. *My Utmost For His Highest*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1992.
- Chapman, Gary. *The Other Side of Love: Handling Anger in a Godly Way*. Chicago, IL: Moody, 1999.
- Clinton, Robert. *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*. Rev. ed. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012.
- Clinton, Richard and Paul Leavenworth. *Starting Well: Building a Strong Foundation For a Lifetime of Ministry*. Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1994.
- Cole, Allan Hugh, ed. *From Midterms to Ministry: Practical Theologians On Pastoral Beginnings*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008.
- Collins, Gary R. *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide*. Waco, TX: Word, 1980.
- Cordry, Harold V. *The Multicultural Dictionary of Proverbs: Over 20,000 Adages from More Than 120 Languages, Nationalities and Ethnic Groups*. 1997. Reprint, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005.
- Covey, Stephen R., A. Roger Merrill and Rebecca R. Merrill. *First Things First: To Live, To Love, To Learn, To Leave a Legacy*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- Crabb, Larry. *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1977.
- David, Peter H. *New International Biblical Commentary: James*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.
- Degroat, Chuck. *Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead, and Love the Difficult People in Your Life – Including Yourself*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans. 2014.
- Douglas, J. D. *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*. Leicester, England: IVP, 1980.
- Edwards, Gene. *A Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1992.
- Fee, Gordon D. *New International Biblical Commentary: 1 And 2 Timothy, Titus*. Edited by W. Ward Gasque. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988.
- Feinberg, John S. "Luther's Doctrine: Some Problems of Interpretation and Application." *Fides Et Historia* 12 (1979): 50-67.
- Friesen, Garry. *Decision Making And The Will Of God: A Biblical Alternative To The Traditional View*. Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1980.

- Greggo, Stephen P. & Timothy A. Sisemore, eds. *Counseling and Christianity: Five Approaches*. N.p.: IVP, 2012.
- Greidanus, Sidney. *Preaching Christ From Genesis: Foundations For Expository Sermons*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007.
- Guinness, O. S. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Nashville, TN: Word Books, 1998.
- Hall, Dudley. *Grace Works: Letting God Rescue You From Empty Religion*. Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1992.
- Hauerwas, Stanley, and William H. Willimon. *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*. NV: Abingdon, 1989.
- Hawkins, O.S. *Getting Down To Brass Tacks: Advice From James For Real World Christians*. Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1993.
- Hiestand, Gerald, Todd Wilson. *The Pastor Theologian: Resurrecting An Ancient Vision*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
- Hubbard, David Allan, and Glenn W. Barker. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982.
- Huffman, Douglas S., ed., Henry and Richard Blackaby, Garry Friesen, Gordon T. Smith, cons. *How Then Should We Choose: Three Views on God's Will and Decision Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2009.
- Hunter, Rodney J., gen. ed., H. Newton Malony, Liston O. Mills, and John Patton. *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. N.p.: Abingdon, 1990.
- Ironside, H.A. *An Ironside Expository Commentary: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2008.
- Jefferson, Charles Edward. *The Minister As Shepherd: The Privileges and Responsibilities of Pastoral Leadership*. Fort Washington, PA: CLC, 2006.
- Johnson, W. Brad, and William L. Johnson. *The Minister's Guide to Psychological Disorders and Treatments*. Third Avenue, NY: Routledge, 2014.
- Jr., Gene Edward Veith. *God at Work (Redesign): Your Vocational Christian Work in All of Life*. Redesign ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Karon, Jan. *The Mitford Years, At Home in Mitford*. Colorado Springs, CO: Lion, 1994.
- Kollar, C. A. *Solution-Focused Pastoral Counseling*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997.

- Lam, Edwin. *Changing Destinies: Living With A Passionate Vision*. Singapore: Transforming Life In Communities, 2014.
- Laniak, Timothy S. *New Studies in Biblical Theology*. Vol. 20, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*. Leicester, England: Apollos, 2006.
- Levinson, Daniel J. et al. *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- MacArthur, John F. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Romans 1-8*. Chicago: Moody, 1991.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Acts*. Edited (gen. ed.) by R.V.G. Tasker. Leicester, England: IVP, 1991.
- McCartney, Dan G. *James: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009.
- McIntosh, Gary, and Samuel D. Rima. *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: The Paradox of Personal Dysfunction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997.
- Miles, Rebekah. *The Pastor as Moral Guide*. Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1999.
- Miller, Arthur F., and William Hendricks. *Why You Can't Be Anything You Want To Be*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999.
- Moon, Gary W. and David G. Benner, eds. *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*. N.p.: IVP, 2004.
- Morris, Thomas V. *Making Sense of it all: Pascal and the Meaning of Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Newman, Barclay M., Jr. *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*. Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1993.
- Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Creative Ministry*. NY: Random House, 2003.
- . *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections On Christian Leadership*. NY: Crossroad, 1989.
- O'Connell, Marvin R. *Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart*. Grand Rapids: MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997.
- O'Donnell, Kelly. *Global Member Care*. Vol. 1, *The Pearls and Perils of Good Practice*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2011.



- , ed. *Missionary Care*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1992.
- , ed. *Doing Member Care Well : Perspectives and Practices from Around*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 2002.
- Ong, Hwai Teik. *Finishing Well in Ministry: Lessons from Paul*. Singapore: Graceworks, 2014.
- Osborne, Grant R. *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series: Romans*. Edited by D. Stuart Briscoe, and Haddon Robinson. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004.
- Palmer, Parker J. *Let Your Life Speak – Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2000.
- Parrott, Leslie and Les Parrott. *The Career Counselor: Charting Your Lifelong Career Path*. USA: Word Books, 1995.
- Perkins, William. *A Treatise of the Vocations, Or Callings of Men with the Sorts and Kinds of Them, and the Right Use Thereof*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1605.
- Peterson, David G. *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Acts Of The Apostles*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2009.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *The Pastor*. Broadway, NY: Harper Collins, 2011.
- . *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1980.
- . *Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987.
- . *Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994.
- Piper, John. *Let The Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.
- Purves, Andrew. *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition*. Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001.
- Ranson, Guy H. "The Christian Doctrine of Vocation." *Review and Expositor* 54, no. 4 (Oct 1957): 597.
- Renckly, Richard G. *Human Resources*. Barron's Business Library. Hauppauge, NY: Barron, 1997.
- Robinson, Haddon W. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2014.

- Ross, Allen P. *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of the Book of Genesis*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988.
- Rybash, John M., Paul Roodin, and William J. Hoyer. *Adult Development and Aging*. 3rd ed. Madison: Brown & Benchmark, 1995.
- Ryken, Leland. *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995.
- Sanders, R. K., ed. *Christian Counseling Ethics: A Handbook for Psychologists, Therapists and Pastors*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2013.
- Scorgie G. Glen, general ed. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Edited by Simon Chan, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith III. USA: Zondervan, 2011.
- Sell, Charles M. *Transitions through Adult Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991.
- Shaw, Perry. *Transforming Theological Education: A Practical Handbook for Integrative Learning*. Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2014.
- Sherman, Doug, and William Hendricks. *Your Work Matters to God*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1987.
- Smith, Gordon T. *Courage and Calling: Embracing Your God-Given Potential*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2006.
- Stevens, R Paul. *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Stott, John R W. *Basic Christian Leadership: Biblical Models of Church, Gospel and Ministry*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006.
- Stott, John R W. *Christian Mission in the Modern World*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1975.
- Swindoll, Charles R. *Swindoll's New Testament Insights: Insights On Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Sunukjian, Donald Robert. *Invitation to Theological Studies Series, Invitation to Biblical Preaching: Proclaiming Truth with Clarity and Relevance*. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2007.
- Suttle, Tim. *Shrink: Faithful Ministry in a Church-Growth Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- Swetland, Kenneth L. *Facing Messy Stuff in the Church: Case Studies for Pastors and Congregations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2005.

- Tate, Robert. "Retaining Skilled, Trained Workers." *Financial Executive* 23, no. 5 (June 2007): 16.
- Taylor, William D., ed. *Too Valuable to Lose: Exploring the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey, 1997.
- Tripp, Paul David. *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands: Helping People in Need of Change*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2002.
- Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010.
- Vanhoozer Kevin J. and Owen Strachan. *The Pastor As Public Theologian: Reclaiming A Lost Vision*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2015.
- Veith, Gene Edward. "Vocation: The Theology of the Christian Life." *Journal of Markets & Morality* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 122.
- Veith, Gene Edward Jr. *God at Work (Redesign): Your Vocational Christian Work in All of Life*. Redesign ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011.
- Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary*. Vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15*. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.
- White, Jerry E., and Mary White. *On the Job: Survival or Satisfaction*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1988.
- Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life Study Guide*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014. Kindle.
- Williams, Theodore. *Living Without Regret: Practical, Biblical Answers to Encourage a Lifestyle of Faith, Sacrifice and Commitment*. Singapore: OMF, 1990.
- Wilson, Michael Todd, and Brad Hoffman. *Preventing Ministry Failure: A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007.
- Wong, David W. F. *Finishing Well: Closing Life's Significant Chapters*. Singapore: Finishing Well Ministries, 2007.

## SOURCES CONSULTED

- Boa, Kenneth. "Conformed to His Image." Bible.org. Accessed Apr 1, 2014. <https://bible.org/series/conformed-his-image>.
- Brewer, David. "God's Covenant with Abraham." FAQ Answers. Accessed September 21, 2016. <http://www.shalach.org/FAQQuestions/FAQAnswers/FAQanswersA28.htm>.
- Brosend, William. "Staying power: Living by the Word." *Christian Century* 117, no. 13 (Apr 19-26, 2000): 455. Accessed January 30, 2014. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.gordonconwell.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=04982d4d-917c-42ca-978720723611ff4a%40sessionmgr4008&vid=7&hid=4201>.
- Buchanan, Joe. "The Key to Longevity in the Ministry is Balance." Pastors.com Community. Accessed January 8, 2014. <http://pastors.com/the-key-to-longevity-in-the-ministry-is-balance/>.
- Buchanan, John M. "Staying Power." *Christian Century* 122, no. 22 (November 1, 2005): 3. Accessed December 1, 2005. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.gordonconwell.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=04982d4d-917c-42ca-978720723611ff4a%40sessionmgr4008&vid=5&hid=4201>.
- Canfield, Jack. "One At A Time." CYC-Online. Accessed April 17, 2014. <http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0302-starfish.html>.
- Cole, Steven J. "Lesson 20: Finishing Well (2 Tim 4:6-8)." Bible.org. Accessed January 8, 2014. <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-20-finishing-well-2-timothy-46-8>.
- Colson, Chuck. "Your Work, Your Calling." Break Point. Accessed Sep 20, 2016. <https://www.breakpoint.org/bpcommentaries/entry/13/10337>.
- Copenhaver, Martin B. "Staying Power: Reflections on a Long Pastorate." *Christian Century* 130, no. 6 (March 20, 2013): 28-31. Accessed March 30, 2013. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.gordonconwell.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=04982d4d-917c-42ca-9787-20723611ff4a%40sessionmgr4008&vid=9&hid=4201>.
- Covenants. "What are the Different Covenants in the Bible?" Compelling Truth. Accessed September 21, 2016. <http://www.compellingtruth.org/covenants-in-the-Bible.html>.
- Dictionary. "Station." Merriam-Webster. Accessed September 19, 2016. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/station>.

- Driscoll, Mark. "A Secret to Longevity in Ministry." Treasuring Christ Together Network. Accessed January 8, 2014. <http://www.tctnetwork.org/a-secret-to-longevity-in-ministry-by-mark-driscoll/>.
- Gaultiere, Bill. "Mapping Your Spiritual Journey." Soul Shepherding. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.soulshepherding.org/2015/04/mapping-your-spiritual-journey>.
- Giesen, Karen. "The Life Of Howard G. "Prof" Hendricks." DTS Magazine. Accessed January 8, 2014. <http://www.dts.edu/read/howard-hendricks-prof/>.
- Google. "Vocation." Google Translation. Accessed September 19, 2016. [https://www.google.com.sg/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C5CHFA\\_enSG504SG511&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=vocation%20meaning](https://www.google.com.sg/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&rlz=1C5CHFA_enSG504SG511&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=vocation%20meaning).
- Green, Lisa Cannon. "Why 734 Pastors Quit (and How Their Churches Could Have Kept Them)?" Gleanings. Accessed February, 2017. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/january/why-734-pastors-quit-how-churches-could-have-kept-them.html>.
- Hansen, Collin. "Why Are Pastors Leaving Churches So They Can Pastor?" The Gospel Coalition. Accessed February 29, 2016. <http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-are-pastors-leaving-churches-so-they-can-pastor>.
- Howell, James C. "Staying power: Faith Matter." *Christian Century* 124, no. 22 (October 30, 2007): 31. Accessed January 30, 2014. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.gordonconwell.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=04982d4d-917c-42ca-9787-20723611ff4a%40sessionmgr4008&vid=11&hid=4201>.
- Jerome, St. "Reflections on Our Faith: Thursday, September 30." St. Matthias Bulletin. Accessed September 20, 2016. [http://www.stmatthiasparish.com/transunion/reflections\\_on\\_our\\_faith/page/6/](http://www.stmatthiasparish.com/transunion/reflections_on_our_faith/page/6/).
- Langston, Rick. "Running The Race To finish Well." Cru Singapore. Accessed March 7, 2014. <http://www.cru.org.sg/running-the-race-to-finish-well/>.
- Livingstone, David. "Missionary Mottes." Churchages. Accessed December 30, 2015. <http://churchages.com/en/missions/mottoes/>.
- Nathanson, Craig. "What's the Difference between a Job and a Vocation?" Trans4mind. Accessed Sep 19, 2016. <http://www.trans4mind.com/counterpoint/index-creativity-career/nathanson14.shtml>.
- Naugle, David K. "Redeeming Vocation." Break Point. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.colsoncenter.org/the-center/columns/indepth/15248-redeeming-vocation>.

- OpenBible. "Conflict Resolution." OpenBible.info. Accessed April 2014. [http://www.openbible.info/topics/conflict\\_resolution](http://www.openbible.info/topics/conflict_resolution).
- Peters, Tim. "10 Real Reasons Pastors Quit Too Soon." Church Leaders. Accessed January 8, 2014. [http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/161343-tim\\_peters\\_10\\_common\\_reasons\\_pastors\\_quit\\_too\\_soon.html](http://www.churchleaders.com/pastors/pastor-articles/161343-tim_peters_10_common_reasons_pastors_quit_too_soon.html).
- Powell, John R. "Featured Review: Too Valuable to Lose, Understanding the Causes and Cures of Missionary Attrition by William D. Taylor." *Journal Of Psychology & Theology* 27, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 192-194. Accessed 30 January 2014, 9.26pm. <http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.gordonconwell.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=04982d4d-917c-42ca-9787-20723611ff4a%40sessionmgr4008&vid=18&hid=4201>.
- Rave, Carolyn. "Writing a Personal Development Plan." Cru Press Green. Accessed September 20, 2016. <https://www.cru.org/content/dam/cru/legacy//2012/03/Personal-Development-Plan.pdf>.
- Scanned Thoughts. "The 12 Apostles: Skinned, Stoned, Sawed, Burned and Beheaded." Wordpress. Accessed September 19, 2016. <http://scannedthoughts.wordpress.com/2010/03/29/the-12-apostles-skinned-stoned-crucified-and-beheaded/>.
- Strong's. "1128. Gumnazo." Bible Hub. Accessed September 21, 2016. <http://biblehub.com/greek/1128.htm>.
- Strong's. "1249. Diakonos." Bible Hub. Accessed December 30, 2015. <http://biblehub.com/greek/1249.htm>.
- Strong's. "1401. Doulos." Bible Hub. Accessed December 30, 2015. <http://biblehub.com/greek/1401.htm>.
- Strong's, "4190. Ponerōs," Bible Hub, accessed September 21, 2016, Accessed June 8, 2016. <http://biblehub.com/greek/4190.htm>.
- Townshend, Rob. "Ministry Longevity." National Network of Youth Ministries. Accessed January 8, 2014. <http://www.nnym.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/blog.view/BlogID/1569>.
- Veith, Gene Edward. "Authority in Vocation." Ligonier Ministries. Accessed September 20, 2016. <http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/authority-vocation>.

WEA. "ReMAP II: Worldwide Missionary Retention Study & Best Practices." World Evangelical Alliance. Accessed December 30, 2015. [http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/-res3\\_96\\_link\\_1292358945.pdf](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/-res3_96_link_1292358945.pdf).

Wikipedia. "Self-sufficiency." Wikipedia Encyclopedia. Accessed September 21, 2016. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-sufficiency>.

Wikipedia. "Vocational Education." Wikipedia Encyclopedia. Accessed October 5, 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocational\\_education](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vocational_education).

## VITA

Full Name: Casey Kok Cheng, Lok

Date and Place of Birth: 1966, Singapore

Education/Degrees: Master of Divinity (2004-2007)

Years of D.Min. work: 2013-present

Expected Graduation: May 2017